OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

BY E. HOBSON

LONDON DIOCESAN SUNDAY SCHOOL MANUALS

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OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

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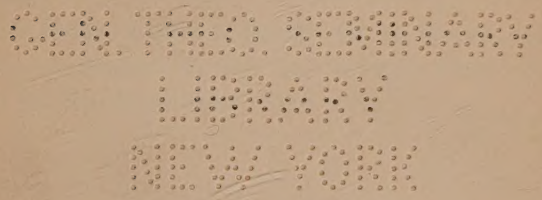
BY THE

REV. EDWIN HOBSON, M.A.

PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL; AND PRINCIPAL OF ST. KATHARINE'S TRAINING COLLEGE, TOTTENHAM



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PREFACE

These series of lessons have been compiled in accordance with the Syllabus of Graded Lessons for Sunday Schools drawn up by the Director of Sunday Schools in the Diocese of London. They attempt to meet the desire of the Bishop of London's Sunday School Council for a series of Manuals compiled to help teachers to give definite Church teaching and enable them to present it in an interesting and effective manner to their scholars.

Each Author is alone responsible for his Manual, and the Bishop of London's Council has no responsibility for any views that may be presented in this work.

COMMENDATORY NOTE

By the Bishop of London

I wish heartily God-speed to these little Manuals which are issued under the direction of my Sunday School Council. We have splendid material to use in the devotion and self-sacrifice of thousands of Sunday School Teachers, and my great desire is to forge that material into a more effective instrument for moulding the lives and characters of the children committed to their care.

It is in the hope that this series of Manuals will be of great help to the teachers in preparing their lessons for the children that we now send them forth.

A. F. LONDON.

Fulham Palace, S.W.,
September 1912.

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INTRODUCTION

A VITAL matter in any hopeful measures of Sunday School reform is grading or classification. The teachers must be graded according to their abilities and experience, and must have work assigned to them which is suitable to their powers; the children must be graded according to their age or attainments or capacities, and lessons must be graded, "milk for babes" and more solid food for those who are of riper years. Numbers of teachers, who might have rendered good and useful service in certain departments of Sunday School work, have been disheartened and driven to despair by being set to discharge duties for which they were not intellectually qualified, or not prepared by training or experience. The grouping into one class of the intelligent and the dull, the ignorant and the comparatively well informed, leads to disorder, makes the one section pert and self-satisfied, and the other either lethargic and morose or else undisciplined and mischievous; and a rigid uniformity of lessons is like the bed of Procrustes, repressing the natural and healthy activities of the more capable and advanced scholars, and affording no encouragement to the less capable and backward.

The following course of Lessons has been prepared with the view of suggesting to teachers appropriate matter and methods for the instruction of scholars of "thirteen years and upwards" in the Earthly Life of Our Blessed Lord. The minimum age specified would correspond roughly with that of the highest classes of our Elementary Schools, and with these would be grouped those who have left the Day School but still continue their attendance in the Sunday School. Within the limits suggested there must needs be a considerable variety of ability and attainment in the scholars, and this variety will be further conditioned by the character of the School.

No grading or classification can be absolutely perfect; each class has special features of its own, each child in some respects requires special treatment; no lessons can exactly meet all needs; the most the writer can do is to outline and suggest treatment in general terms; with the teacher must always rest the absolutely necessary and most important work of *adaptation*. I may mention one or two directions in which this adaptation may be carried out.

(a) *In the reading of Holy Scripture*—the portions which form the matter of the Lessons or which are referred to for illustration. The old-fashioned method of "reading round the class" is now generally, and rightly, discredited. It affords an opportunity to the lazy of lazing, and rarely secures the continuous attention of the whole class; at the same time it draws attention very often to the reader and the reading rather than to what is read. Silent reading of selected portions, followed by questions which will test the intelligence or application of the reader; reading of single verses or short passages by the teacher for the sake of emphasis; reading aloud of "references" by individual scholars—these are varieties of treatment which have the advantage of relieving monotony and quickening attention. But, in order that this advantage may be gained, the teacher should have himself carefully studied the passages beforehand, and should have determined what method of treating each particular passage is best adapted to the circumstances of his class and the powers of individual scholars.

(b) *Illustration.*—The two pages allowed for each Lesson, and the vast extent of the subject matter, have given the writer very little space for "illustration." This must be left for the most part to the teacher; Maps, Pictures, Models, Blackboard sketches should be carefully prepared and freely used. The world of Nature, the experiences of everyday life, the incidents that have happened within the knowledge of the scholars, will furnish quarries from which illustrations may be drawn; and such "homely" illustrations will be far more likely to arrest attention and drive home lessons than any which can be suggested from outside.

(c) *Spiritual and Moral Applications.*—The writer is fully sensible of the inadequacy of the "Applications" at the end of the Lessons.

Partly this was due to the limitation of space, but also to the feeling that the application would be best made by those who had personal knowledge (so far as it could be had) of the spiritual and moral condition of those on whom the Lesson was to be impressed. The "moral" of a story is very often best apprehended by letting the story point its own moral; and so the personal attitude which the teacher takes with reference to his subject—the "bated breath" with which he speaks of some mystery of the Faith; the reverence with which he treats of sacred subjects; the living interest which he exhibits in the characters and words of Holy Scripture; the devotion which in simple ways he shows for the Person of our Most Holy Redeemer—these will influence boys and girls for good far more than formal "applications." But to do this the teacher must have felt the constraining force of the Lesson which he is giving, and must have prepared himself to teach it to others in a spirit of prayer. The scholars contemplated will either be preparing for Confirmation and First Communion, or will but recently have passed through this stage in their spiritual life, and no opportunity should be missed of quickening or strengthening religious aspirations and confirming good resolutions.

The boys and girls of the present day receive very stimulating teaching in secular subjects in our Elementary Schools: they will not rest satisfied with vapid generalities and mere emotional appeals in the religious teaching of the Sunday School. The "inattention," which is the burden of the teacher's chief complaint, is more often than not due to the fact that the teacher has nothing to offer to his class which is worth their attention; a well-prepared and thoughtful Lesson is the best instrument both for gaining attention and for securing order and good discipline.

In using the following Lessons as helps in his preparation, the teacher should consult the following:

The Holy Bible—preferably the Teacher's Bible—with the New Testament, at least, in the Revised Version.

A Harmony of the Gospels—that of the Rev. J. M. Fuller, published by S.P.C.K. (1*s.* 6*d.*), is recommended.

A Simple Commentary on the Gospels—that of Bishop Walsham How, published by S.P.C.K. (4*s*.), or Dummelow's *One Volume Bible Commentary* (7*s*. 6*d*.).

A Bible Dictionary—Hastings' abridged (21*s*.), or the new edition of Smith's (21*s*.).

A Life of Our Lord—Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (8*s*.); Farrar's *Life of Christ;* or D. Smith's *The Days of His Flesh* (10*s*. 6*d*.).

A Bible Atlas.

[It will be observed that the limitation of the number of Lessons to fifty-two has prevented the inclusion of many of the incidents and discourses of Our Lord's Life. The Collects and Hymns have been selected as suggesting in most cases thoughts in correspondence with the Lessons.]

EDWIN HOBSON.

S. KATHARINE'S COLLEGE,
TOTTENHAM, *September* 1912.

OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

Lesson I. THE LIFE OF OUR BLESSED LORD

PREPARATION

We begin to-day a new course of Lessons. The subject is "The Life of Our Blessed Lord." Biographies of great men learnt in school. Great kings (*e.g.* Alfred the Great), great warriors (*e.g.* the Duke of Wellington), great writers (*e.g.* Shakespeare). All these very interesting and instructive. The Life of Our Lord high above all these. Why?

(1) It was *a perfect Life:* He was

A Son who never did amiss;
Who never shamed His mother's kiss
Nor crossed her fondest prayer,

and so *a perfect Pattern* for us to imitate. *Cp.* the importance of having a good "copy" if we are learning to write, or draw, or paint.

(2) It was the *Life of God lived amongst men;*—

JESUS IS GOD

Charles Lamb, a very thoughtful writer, said: "If the Duke of Wellington were to come into this room, I should stand; but if Jesus Christ were to come in, I should kneel." Why? We stand to show respect to man; we kneel to show homage to God. The Gospels, which tell the story of the Life of Our Lord, are the holiest books in the Holy Bible. [Reason why we stand at the reading of the Gospel in the Service of Holy Communion.] Before we begin, let us stand and say the Collect: *Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures . . .* (Second Sunday in Advent).

PRESENTATION

(i) *The Eternal Life of Our Lord.*—The Biographies of men begin with their birth (*e.g.* our King was born June 3, 1865). We cannot go back earlier in his history than that. But Our Lord had an eternal Life, *without beginning* as well as without end. Read S. John i. 1. "*In the beginning* (before the Creation, before Time began) was the WORD." Who is meant by the WORD? Jesus Christ, the Second Person in the Holy Trinity. Let us try to see why this Name was given to Him. I think of something, say, a flower. Can you tell what I am thinking of? No. But if I put my thought into a *word*, *e.g.* "Rose," then you know what was in my mind. So Our Blessed Lord told us what was in the mind of God; He *declared* God (S. John i. 18)—made Him known to us—and so is called the WORD. Read S. John i. 1–18.

(ii) *The Life of Our Lord on earth.*—Read again verse 14. Who is the WORD? What is it said that He *was made* or *became? Flesh.* What was He before that? *Spirit.* He was *made Flesh,* "took our nature upon Him." What is this called? *Incarnation, i.e.* the taking of flesh (*cp.* Litany: "By the mystery of Thy Holy Incarnation"). Read 1 John i. 1, 2. When did this earthly Life begin? His Birthday. When did it end? When He ascended into Heaven; see S. Mark xvi. 19, and *cp.* Creed.

(iii) *The Life of Our Lord in Heaven.*—The end of the earthly Life was the beginning of another Life: He *ever liveth* (Heb. vii. 25)—seen by S. Stephen (Acts vii. 55, 56).

The subject of our Lessons is the second of these, the Life on earth; but we must never forget the first and third. The Jesus who lived on earth for thirty-three years was the WORD, Who "was in the beginning with God"; it is the same Jesus who now "sitteth at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father," and who shall "come again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead."

How the Incarnation was announced to men.—Read S. Luke i. 26–38. Mary, a simple village maiden, though descended from King David, living at Nazareth (show on Map): while she was praying, or meditating, the Angel Gabriel sent to her (*cp.* verse 19); God's messenger. What was his message? That she should be the Mother of Him who was God; that she was "highly favoured," or endued with grace, and blessed among women. So we always speak of her as "The Blessed Virgin Mary." This is called the Annunciation [*i.e.* the Announcement of the Birth of the Saviour]. We keep it in remembrance on 25th March.

APPLICATION

"The WORD made flesh," "God taking our Nature upon Him; becoming Man." The greatest of wonders. Well called in the Litany "the *mystery* of the Holy Incarnation." Something beyond our understanding, which God has made known to us. Why did God become Man?

1st, That we might learn what God is.

2nd, That God might experience man's sorrows, and show His love by dying for us.

3rd, That we might grow like God.

Read the clause in the Nicene Creed: *Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven . . .*

Collect for the Annunciation.

Hymn 449: "The God, Whom earth, and sea and sky."

Lesson II. OUR LORD'S FORERUNNER

PREPARATION

Kings and great men in old times, when going on a journey, sent someone in advance to announce their coming, and to make the necessary preparations. No telegraph or posts, no trains, often no roads; hills had to be levelled and hollows filled up—this will explain Isa. xl. 3, 4, which we shall have to refer to again. Our Lord came to be a King, and it was fitting that He should have one to prepare men for His coming—one whom we call His Forerunner; this was JOHN THE BAPTIST, though it was not till many years after that the reason of his being so called was made known.

PRESENTATION

Let class read S. Luke i. 5–23 silently.

The aged Priest and his faithful wife.—Read S. Luke i. 5–10. An aged Priest Zacharias, consecrated to the service of God, appointed to offer sacrifices (verse 9); his wife Elizabeth, also of the family of Aaron, from which the Priests were taken. The temple at Jerusalem, the House of God; Priests took Service in turns; it fell to the turn of Zacharias one day to offer incense, sweet-smelling gum that was burnt and sent up clouds of smoke, which represented Prayer going up to God.

The Angel's message.—Read S. Luke i. 11–23. The Angel the same that appeared *later* to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Lesson I),—Gabriel (verse 19). Notice the twofold duty of Angels (*a*) to "stand before God" ["do Him service in heaven"], (*b*) to minister to men on earth—"Sent to show thee these glad tidings." What was the message? read verse 13. [*Cp.* the message that was brought to Blessed Virgin Mary a few months later.] "John" means "the grace of God." At first Zacharias did not believe the Angel's message. What was his punishment?—verse 20. Wonder of the people: Zacharias not able to explain.

The Birth of S. John the Baptist.—Read S. Luke i. 57–66. Zacharias,

having finished his duties as Priest in Jerusalem, went back to his home, "a city of Judah" (show on Map). Here in due time the promise of the Angel was fulfilled, and the child was born.

Circumcision.—The rite by which Jewish children were brought into covenant with God, and the Naming (*cp.* Baptism, and the giving of the Christian name). Zacharias *or* John? The father settled the question, giving the name the Angel had given, and so showing his faith in the Angel's message. Recovered speech (verse 64).

The Song of Zacharias.—Read S. Luke i. 67–80. Zacharias was "filled with the Holy Ghost"—the Holy Spirit that "spake by the prophets" (Nicene Creed); and the first use he made of his recovered power of speech was to praise God in the words of the sacred song or canticle which he called the *Benedictus*, that being the first word (meaning *Blessed*) in the Latin form of the canticle. Note that in verses 67–75 Zacharias speaks of Jesus Christ, who should be born of the house of David (verse 69); Jesus was still unborn, and Zacharias was speaking by the Holy Ghost, and prophesying of His coming. In verse 76 he turns to his child, John the Baptist, and describes his office "to go before the face of the Lord to make ready His ways" [the FORERUNNER—we shall see in later Lessons how this was fulfilled]. Notice the place of the *Benedictus* in Morning Prayer.

APPLICATION

Refer to the Collect for the Third Sunday in Advent: "O Lord Jesu Christ, who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee . . ." Who was this messenger? Then we pray for the ministers and stewards of God's mysteries. Who are they? The clergy; and their work is to prepare men to receive Jesus Christ—first, as He comes now into the hearts of men, and then as He will come at the last Day. How do they do this? By Baptizing, by Preaching and Teaching, as we shall find later John the Baptist did.

Collect for the Third Sunday in Advent.

Hymn 48: "The Advent of our King."

Lesson III. THE VISITATION: THE SONG OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

PREPARATION

Our last Lesson—(*a*) the Announcement by the Angel of the Baptist's Birth; (*b*) the Fulfilment of the Angel's message; (*c*) the Song of Zacharias. Something left out that came between (*a*) and (*b*). Read S. Luke i. 39. The Visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. Point out on the Map the journey that would have to be taken from Nazareth to "a city of Judah." Show a picture of, or describe, the meeting between these two holy women. "Each had received a message from God, brought by the same holy angel; each was silently waiting for the message to be fulfilled. We are told by S. Luke something of the sacred confidences of these saints. How did S. Luke know of them? We think he must have been told of these and other incidents connected with the birth of our Lord and His Forerunner by the Blessed Virgin herself.

PRESENTATION

The Witness borne by Elizabeth to the Blessed Virgin Mary.—Read S. Luke i. 42, 43. Who was it that spoke? Elizabeth; and we are told in the verse before that she was "filled with the Holy Ghost." Notice how humble she was: "Whence is this to me?" How reverential to the Blessed Virgin, whom she calls "the mother of my Lord." Like the Angel Gabriel she calls the Virgin *blessed* (verses 42 and 45).

The Song of the Blessed Virgin.—Read S. Luke i. 46–55. Words well known. Why? Place in the Service. The name *Magnificat*—meaning "doth magnify"; the first word of the canticle in Latin, the language in which it used to be sung. (*Cp.* explanation of *Benedictus* in Lesson II.) What is the subject of S. Mary's Song? The Incarnation of our Blessed Lord: that "He took our nature upon Him," and should be "born of a pure virgin."

(*a*) Read again verses 46–49. The condescension of God; the lowliness of the Blessed Virgin: she calls herself God's handmaiden,

i.e. His slave or bondwoman. At the same time she claims that "blessedness" which the angel Gabriel had attributed to her: "all generations shall call me blessed."

(*b*) Read verses 50–55. The Blessed Virgin recognises that God's dealing with her is only one example of His way of dealing with men at all times: His way is to "put down the mighty from their seats" (to cast down princes from their thrones), and "to exalt the humble and meek." [Tell the story of Nebuchadnezzar from Dan. iii. and iv. Note especially the last words of chap. iv.; and contrast the case of Daniel, raised from a humble position to be "the third ruler in the kingdom"—Dan. v. 29.]

(*c*) Read verses 54 and 55. Again the Blessed Virgin thinks of the promises that God had made thousands of years before to Abraham and Jacob. [Read Gen. xxii. 18: Abraham was the forefather or ancestor of the Blessed Virgin, and so of the Saviour to be born, in Whom all generations—all people for all time—should be blessed.]

APPLICATION

Our Lesson relates the *sacred confidences* of two holy women. Mary stayed three months with her kinswoman, and no doubt they talked often of God's goodness and of their hopes of the coming Saviour. Sometimes we are too shy to tell even our best friends, our clergyman or our parents, of good thoughts and hopes which God puts into our hearts. We call it "cant" when people talk religiously without meaning it; those who do so are hypocrites; but we need not be ashamed to talk religiously when we do mean it.

How was the Blessed Virgin able to make up such a beautiful Song of Praise on the spur of the moment, as it seemed? No doubt she was like Elizabeth (verse 41), and Zacharias (verse 67), "filled with the Holy Ghost"; but she had learnt the song of a holy woman of her nation—Hannah (1 Sam. ii.), and reproduced many of her words. [Collects and words of Holy Scripture which you learn will give you words in which to speak to God when occasion comes.]

Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

Hymn 450: "Shall we not love thee, Mother dear."

Lesson IV. THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

PREPARATION

In a former Lesson (No. I) we heard of the announcement that the Saviour should be born. To whom was it made? Who brought the message? Never had Angel a more glorious task! The good news was brought to someone else—to Joseph, who was *betrothed* (*i.e.* engaged to be married) to the holy Virgin; he was a carpenter living at Nazareth, but, though following a humble trade, he was (like S. Mary) of the royal house of David; to him the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream, and told him that it would be his privilege to watch over the Son of Mary, Who was the Son of God. Because of this high honour, and because of his obedience and fidelity, he is reckoned among the Saints; we call him S. Joseph.

PRESENTATION

The Removal to Bethlehem.—Read S. Luke ii. 1-7. S. Mary and S. Joseph left Nazareth and went for a time to stay at Bethlehem (show on Map). Why was this? There was a "taxing," what we should call a "census" (like that made in England in 1911), and everyone had to go to "his own city," *i.e.* to his native place, or to the place from which his family started. [This census or enrolment was perhaps for purposes of taxation.] What a commotion it would have made in 1911 if all the Yorkshire people in London had been required to travel to Yorkshire, and all the Londoners in Yorkshire to come to London, and so on all over the country. But in those days the populations were much smaller and the habits of the people much simpler, and it was not so difficult to make this change.

The Birth of the Saviour.—It was while the Blessed Virgin and S. Joseph were at Bethlehem that the word of the Angel was fulfilled. The little town full of people; the inn where these strangers were put up crowded with guests. "No room in the inn" to receive the Virgin and Him Who was "the desire of all nations." So, when He came into the world,

> "*His shelter was a stable*
> *And His cradle was a stall.*"

[A description of the scene of the Nativity will be found in Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah*, p. 185.]

The Shepherds.—Read S. Luke ii. 8–20. This wonderful thing that had happened at Bethlehem first made known to shepherds (humble working-men), who were passing the night in the open air keeping watch over their flocks. Note (i) the appearance of *one* Angel, the splendour striking terror into the hearts of the shepherds. (ii) The good news which the Angel brought (verses 10–12). (iii) The Angel host—their Hymn, "Glory to God in the highest . . ." (verses 13, 14).

Their Visit to Bethlehem.—They lost no time in putting to the test the Angel's word (verse 15). The wondrous sight—A Mother and a Babe, and a plain working-man, with "the oxen standing by"—a picture which the greatest artists in the world have loved above all things to paint. [*Show a picture*, and if possible give the name of the Artist, and any particulars about him.]

The Circumcision and Naming of Our Lord.—Read S. Luke ii. 21. A week after His birth Our Lord was circumcised according to the Jewish Law. Refer to Lesson II. As we receive our Christian name at our Baptism, so Our Lord at His Circumcision received the Name which had been given to Him before His birth. (Two occasions—S. Luke i. 31, and S. Matt. i. 21.) JESUS, the same as the Old Testament name *Joshua*, means *Saviour*, given to Our Lord because He was "to save His people from their sins." "The Name which is above every name."

We commemorate the Circumcision of Our Lord on 1st January, just a week after Christmas Day.

APPLICATION

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Read Philipp. ii. 5–11. He "made Himself of no reputation"—literally *emptied Himself*—put aside "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was" and became a helpless Babe, depending on an earthly mother for food and care. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor" (2 Cor. viii. 9); "That all mankind should follow the example of His great humility." If we are ever inclined to pride ourselves on looks or dress, or knowledge, or position in life, let us remember how Our Lord "humbled Himself" and "became poor."

Collect for Christmas Day.

Hymn 60: "Hark! the herald angels sing."

Lesson V. THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE

PREPARATION

Picture the Infant Saviour being taken by S. Mary and S. Joseph from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. He is now forty days old. Why was this journey undertaken? The old Jewish Law, that the first-born in every family was to be *dedicated*—specially set apart for God; it was meant to bring to their minds the coming out of Egypt, when all the first-born of the Egyptians died. Jesus was Mary's first-born Son, and she was doing with Him what the Law commanded. What does she carry in her hand? The *pair of doves*, which was a Jewish mother's offering to God after the birth of her child. If she had been a rich woman she would have brought a lamb and a dove (Lev. xii. 6); hers was the poor woman's offering, and we learn from this that she was "not born in any high estate."

PRESENTATION

The Going to Jerusalem.—Silent reading, S. Luke ii. 22–38. So for the first time the Saviour was brought into His Father's House; it fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi (iii. 1): *The Lord Whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His Temple.* There He would be received by the Priest on duty, who would accept the offering on God's behalf, and then return Him to His mother. The Priest would also present to God the offering the mother had brought for her *Purification.*

Simeon.—Read verses 25–27. There were two spectators present at this great service in the Temple. The first was *Simeon.* What are we told of him in verse 25? That he was *just* (*i.e.* that he was fair and upright in his dealings with men), *devout* (*i.e.* observant of his duty to God), *waiting for the consolation of Israel, i.e.* for the Christ [the Consoler] Who was to be born. God had promised that he should live to see the Christ, for Whom all devout Jews were waiting. Now the Spirit brought him into the Temple, and in some way made it known to him that the Child with the poor, simple parents was "the Lord Whom he sought."

The Song of Simeon.—Read verses 28–32. What is the meaning of

verse 29? Simeon said that the time had come for him to die; he saw now, in the Child in his arms, the One for whom he had waited so long—God's *salvation*, the Saviour of the World. The Child was to be (i) *a Light to lighten the Gentiles*—the people outside the Jewish nation, who "lay in darkness and the shadow of death"—to these He was to be *a light*, as He called Himself "the Light of the World" (S. John viii. 12); (ii) *the glory of God's people Israel*, because in Him would be fulfilled the promises God made to Abraham and to Jacob (refer to S. Luke i. 54, 55).

The Warning to S. Mary and S. Joseph.—Read verses 33–35. Even on this Day of rejoicing, Simeon foretold (*a*) that the Saviour should be "despised and rejected of men"; (*b*) that His Blessed Mother should have great sorrow, like "a sword piercing through her heart."

Anna.—Read verses 36–38. Another who witnessed the Presentation of Our Lord was Anna, an aged widow, devoted to the service of God. She added her thanksgiving to that of Simeon, and bore witness to the Holy Child as the Saviour and Redeemer of Israel.

APPLICATION

Recall *our* presentation to God, in Holy Baptism.

The Song of Simeon, called the *Nunc dimittis* from the Latin words with which it began in the old Service Books—sung at Evening Prayer after second Lesson. A Thanksgiving for the Coming of the Saviour proclaimed to us in the New Testament. Sing this and other Hymns *with understanding*.

We commemorate the Purification on 2nd February, forty days after Christmas—anciently called *Candlemas*, because of the many lights burnt in churches in honour of Him Who came to be *A Light to lighten the Gentiles*.

[The incidents and teaching of this event in the Life of Our Lord could not be better impressed upon the class than by reading the Poem for the Feast of the Purification in the *Christian Year*, of which our Hymn forms a part.]

Collect for Feast of Purification.

Hymn 261: "Bless'd are the pure in heart."

Lesson VI. VISIT OF THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST

PREPARATION

You look up to the heavens on a clear night—the multitude of the stars, too many for us to count; but there is One "Who telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by their names" (Ps. cxlvii. 4). Their teaching (refer to Ps. xix. 1). Men in all ages have made a study of the stars (Astronomers), and some have thought to find in them clues to their own future or to that of other men and nations (Astrologers). It was in Eastern lands (Chaldæa, Persia, &c.) that this study was most followed. We shall read to-day of some wise men (Magi) who dwelt in those lands and were led by God to the Infant Saviour.

PRESENTATION

The Coming of the Magi.—Read S. Matt. ii. 1, 2. The Magi, watching the stars night by night, saw something new and strange, which they thought indicated the coming of some great Person; perhaps they had heard the prophecy of Balaam (who was a prophet of their own country: Num. xxiv. 17), and thought this was the *star* referred to. It led them to undertake a long and toilsome journey to Jerusalem. There they found *Herod* reigning as King; the Romans were the real masters of the country, but they left some show of power to Herod, who was a foreigner. We shall find out as we go on what his character was.

The King of the Jews.—Read verses 3–6. This was the title given by the Wise Men to the One they expected. Herod was King, and the mention of another King startled him, as it did all the people. He gathered *the chief priests and scribes*—why?—the leading ministers of religion, and those who copied the Sacred Scriptures and were best acquainted with their contents. Could they tell him where this King (whom he calls *Christ*) was to be born? They referred to their Scriptures, and found in the Book of the Prophet Micah (v. 2) that it was *Bethlehem* [where *we* know Christ *was* born].

Herod and the Wise Men.—Read verses 7 and 8. It was one of Herod's family that Our Lord called *a fox* (S. Luke xiii. 32), and this Herod showed his crafty, fox-like nature by pretending that he wished to go and worship the child Jesus, when the after-story tells that his wish was to murder Him.

The Babe of Bethlehem and His Worshippers.—Read verses 9–12. At last these earnest seekers arrived at Bethlehem. What a disappointment after their long journey to find, not the great Person they expected, but only a helpless Babe in His Mother's arms! But they knew they had not been misled, and they offered *Gold* (in honour of the *King*), and *Incense* (to Him who was *God*), and *Myrrh* (with which the dead were embalmed, to foretell *His death*).

The Flight into Egypt and *the Murder of the Innocents.*—Read verses 13–23. S. Joseph was warned by an angel in a dream of Herod's evil designs towards the Child Jesus; and at the angel's bidding he took the Divine Child and His Mother into Egypt—the land where the people of Israel were in bondage many years before.

Herod, baulked by the failure of the wise men to bring him the news he sought for, slew all the children in Bethlehem under two years of age, thinking thus to make sure of killing the King of the Jews.

The Holy Family remained in Egypt till the cruel Herod was dead, after which they returned, not to Bethlehem, but to the home of S. Mary and S. Joseph in *Nazareth.*

Note in this chapter the references to the fulfilment of what God had before spoken "by the mouth of His holy Prophets" (verses 6, 15, 17, 23).

APPLICATION

Two Festival Days of the Church commemorate the incidents of to-day's Lesson:

(i) *The Epiphany, i.e.* the *Manifestation,* or *Showing* of Christ to the Gentiles—6th January. Read opening words of the Collect: Prayer "that we, which know Thee now by Faith, may after this life have the fruition [*i.e.* enjoyment] of Thy glorious Godhead." Imitate the wise men (*a*) in their faith—which they proved by their long journey, by recognising the King of the Jews in the lowly Babe—and you shall have their reward in seeing God; (*b*) in their offerings. What can we offer?

(ii) *The Holy Innocents' Day.*—28th December; when we keep in mind those who for Jesus' sake "laid down their little lives."

Collects for Feast of Epiphany and Holy Innocents' Day.

Hymn 76: "Earth has many a noble city."

Lesson VII. THE BOYHOOD OF OUR BLESSED LORD

PREPARATION

Recall verse 3 of Hymn 329: ("Once in royal David's city"). *And through all His Wondrous Childhood*—how *wonderful* it must have been—Mary's Child, yet Mary's God! Like other children in growth of body and mind, but so unlike them in other ways! Learning at home from His Mother, in the Synagogue from the appointed teachers; committing to memory the Psalms and other sacred writings of the Old Testament! Playing in the pleasant fields, amidst the lovely flowers, that surrounded His home at Nazareth. But Holy Scripture tells us hardly anything of all that happened during that "wondrous Childhood" and youth; only one precious story from the thirty years nearly of His life at Nazareth. This forms our Lesson to-day.

PRESENTATION

The Going to Jerusalem.—Read S. Luke ii. 41, 42. *The Feast of the Passover*—one of the great Festival Days of the Jews (corresponding to our Easter); it commemorated the coming out of Egypt when the Destroying Angel *passed over* the houses of the Israelites (Exod. xii. 27). On this day every male was required to appear before God in His Temple at Jerusalem. S. Joseph, no doubt, had gone regularly before—this a special occasion—Mary went with him, and the child Jesus (now twelve years old). Try to imagine His thoughts and hopes on this journey. He had reached the age when boyhood was passing into manhood, when He would take upon Himself the privileges and responsibilities of a full member of the Jewish Church (*cp.* our *Confirmation*).

The Stay at Jerusalem: Jesus amongst the Doctors.—Read verses 43–47. The observances of the Feast, which lasted eight days, were over; time to return to Nazareth; Mary and Joseph travelled for a day with the party that had come up from Nazareth for the Feast; thought Jesus was with some of the company; their anxiety at not finding Him; the return to Jerusalem. On the third day after their departure they found Him "in the Temple, sitting *in the midst*

of the Doctors"; those were the *Teachers* amongst the Jews [*cp.* our "Doctor of Divinity"]. *Hearing them, i.e.* listening to their teaching, and *asking them questions* on the subjects of their teaching; He also *answered their questions* (see verse 47), and surprised the bystanders by His understanding (*cp.* verse 40). [Show Picture.]

His Father's Business.—Read verses 48–50. No doubt S. Mary and S. Joseph were filled with joy at finding the Child Jesus; but they reproved Him for the anxiety He had caused them (verse 48). His answer (verse 49). His mother had spoken of S. Joseph as His father, but *He* speaks of another Father. Did ye not know that I must be *doing His business* [the work which He gave Me to do]? or the words may mean, *Did ye not know that I must be in My Father's house?—i.e.* in the courts of the Temple, where the Doctors gathered their scholars around them. So He claimed God as His Father. No wonder that they did not understand (verse 50). Note that these are the first recorded words spoken by Our Lord, the only words which are written down of all that He said for the first thirty years of His Life.

The Return to Nazareth.—Read verses 51 and 52—all the record we have of eighteen years. He was *subject* to His earthly parents, *i.e.* He was obedient to them, and did what they bade Him; and we learn from other places that He worked as a carpenter in Joseph's shop. See S. Matt. xiii. 55; and S. Mark vi. 3. So He "increased in wisdom and in stature"; He *grew* like other boys, and He grew also in knowledge, learning from books and from teachers, and from the world of Nature.

APPLICATION

Read again Philipp. ii. 5–8. Compare last part of Lesson IV. Our Lord, Who, as God, knew all things, *emptied Himself* of this knowledge, and became a learner—an example to us both at home and at school. "My Father's business"—read S. John iv. 34. Our Lord's love for "His Father's House"—refer to S. John ii. 13–17.

Collect: "O Almighty Lord, and everlasting God . . ." (Confirmation Service).

Hymn 78: "The Heav'nly Child in stature grows."

Lesson VIII. THE BEGINNING OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY. THE PREACHING OF THE BAPTIST

PREPARATION

The time of waiting and preparation was over. Our Lord, now about thirty years of age (S. Luke iii. 23) was to be called from His retirement, plunged into the world which proved so hostile to Him—"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Now we have, as S. Mark says (i. 1), "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." *Gospel* means *good news*—one who writes a Gospel is called an *Evangelist*, one who *brings good news*. It is the good news of One Who came to save us from our sins, and to give us everlasting life.

PRESENTATION

The Preaching of the Baptist.—Read S. Mark i. 2–6. Lesson II should have prepared us for this; we learnt there of the mysterious birth of the Baptist, and of the great future that was predicted for him. Read S. Luke i. 80. This relates to the thirty years or more during which the Baptist was being prepared for *his* work—living in the deserts the life of a hermit, apart from men, but communing with God. At length he came forth from his solitude, and began his preaching in "the country about Jordan" (S. Luke iii. 3), *i.e.* in the district round the southern part of the River, near to the Dead Sea. Verse 6 tells us of his clothing—the skin of a camel, with the hair left upon it [such as is worn by the people of countries in the far North] bound round his waist with a thong or strap of leather; his food, the locusts (either animal or vegetable), and the wild honey made by the bees in the rocks or in the hollows of trees. The subject of his preaching was *repentance*, *i.e.* change of mind, change of heart, change of life; this was symbolised by *baptism*, washing in water—the cleansing of the body being a sign or figure of the cleansing of the soul. S. Luke (iii. 1, 2) fixes very accurately the date at which the Baptist began his work; he fixes it not by saying how many years it was after the birth of Christ [as we commonly fix the dates of events], but by naming those who were rulers in Church and State at the time [as we date events by reigns of kings].

Those who came to His Baptism.—Read S. Luke iii. 7–14. (*a*) *The multitude*, mainly Pharisees and Sadducees; The Baptist had little

sympathy with these pretenders to religion; they were told to "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance," *i.e.* to make their lives correspond with their professions. (*b*) *The people*, who seem to have been really in earnest: they were told to be charitable. (*c*) *The Publicans* [*i.e.* the tax-collectors], whom the Jews despised: they were told not to exact or screw out of the people more than they had a right to claim. (*d*) *The soldiers:* they were warned against violence and against bringing false accusations.

The Baptism of Our Lord.—Read S. Luke iii. 21–23. The wonderful preaching of the Baptist, and the authority which he assumed, made some think he must be the Christ—the promised Messiah—but he disclaimed any such distinction for himself, and spoke of One Who was to come, for Whom he was not worthy to render the service of the meanest slave (iii. 16). He saw the fulfilment of this when Jesus came from Nazareth with the crowds that flocked to John's Baptism. Note the Baptist's reluctance to baptize One Who needed no "baptism of repentance," for He had done no sin, and Our Lord's answer: He would do all that man should do, though He did not need this washing; He went into the water as others did (S. Matt. iii. 14, 15). Note that He was praying at the time: it was the beginning of His great work, and He entered upon it, as we should enter upon all our work, with prayer. Note the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him "in a bodily shape," so that men might be assured of His Presence; and the voice of the Eternal Father, speaking from Heaven: "This is My beloved Son." So we have the three Persons of the Holy Trinity put before us in this first act of the Divine Son.

APPLICATION

Lessons we may learn from the foregoing: (*a*) *Patient waiting*—boys and girls often wanting to be men and women and to get the pleasures of independence: Jesus and the Baptist were content to wait God's time. (*b*) *The need of Repentance* such as the Baptist preached. We cannot come to Jesus till we have come away from our sins: our first Baptismal vow is to renounce. (*c*) *The need of Prayer*, especially at the turning-points of our lives, when leaving school, going to work, &c.

Collect for the Third Sunday after Easter.

Hymn 81: "Songs of thankfulness and praise."

Lesson IX. THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD

PREPARATION

Our Blessed Lord at His Baptism was set apart for the work which He was appointed to do; the heavenly Father had signified His approval; the Holy Ghost had been given to enlighten and strengthen Him (as man) to do His Father's Will. But God never gives us gifts without giving us the opportunity of using them; and so *temptation* or *trial* commonly follows God's gifts of grace; it is so often at our Prayers, bad thoughts spring up in our minds at the very time when we are asking God's help to overcome the evil. After Confirmation you must expect Satan to be active, trying to draw you away from God. So it was with Our Blessed Lord—His Baptism was followed by the Temptations, which were to test or prove His faithfulness to the duty He had undertaken.

PRESENTATION

Our Lord was "full of the Holy Ghost" (S. Luke iv. 1); He was led by the same Holy Spirit into the wilderness (some lonely and desolate place) "to be tempted of the devil"—to do battle with the great enemy of God and man. There He spent forty days and forty nights fasting, and all this time He was subjected to the attacks of the evil spirit (S. Luke). The Evangelists tell us of three Temptations which came at the end of this time, and no doubt were representative of all that had gone before.

The First Temptation.—Read S. Matt. iv. 1–4. This arose out of His hunger, His natural craving for food. He was bidden by the Tempter to work a miracle—turning stones into bread—to satisfy His hunger. Note how the Tempter begins his attack: *If Thou be the Son of God*—a reference to the voice from Heaven heard at His Baptism (S. Matt. iii. 17). It was a temptation to take Himself out of the ranks of men and use His power as the Son of God to serve His own needs. But He came to be "made in all things like unto His brethren"—men; and His answer to the Tempter (Deut. viii. 3) states how men—all men—are fed by the heavenly Father's care. The temptation was to *distrust* God—the answer was an expression of boundless trust in Him "Who giveth food to all flesh."

The Second Temptation.—Read S. Matt. iv. 5–7. Our Lord was taken to a very high point of the Temple like the turret of a church, and tempted to throw Himself down, trusting to the promise given in

the Psalms (xci. 11) that angels should bear Him up, and so convince men of His Divine Power. The Devil can quote Scripture to suit his purpose, but he left out some words of the text, which made all the difference—*in all thy ways, i.e.* in the ways of God's appointment, the path of duty. To have obeyed the Tempter would have been to dictate to God (as it were), to demand of Him to do, not what He willed, but what He was asked. Our Lord answered again in the words of Deuteronomy (vi. 16): "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The first temptation was to *distrust*—this was to a kind of *over-trust*—making our own plans for God to work out instead of asking Him to do His Will.

The Third Temptation.—Read S. Matt. iv. 8–10: "All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." Our Lord was and is the true King of men and of all things; the Devil is a usurper, and his claim was not one that would stand (*cp.* S. Luke iv. 6). "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of Our Lord" (Rev. xi. 15); but Our Lord's appointed way to the Crown was through the Cross of suffering and death. The Devil asked Him to forgo the Cross, and win the world by doing homage to him; and the Lord answered: "Get thee behind me, Satan," and again quoted from the book of Deuteronomy (vi. 13) that God only—not Satan—is to be worshipped.

"Then Angels came and ministered unto Him," brought refreshment for His exhausted body, and solaced His soul, wearied as it must have been with the fierce assaults of the evil one.

APPLICATION

Our Lord was "tempted in all points like as we are" (Heb. iv. 15). We are tempted sometimes to indulge our appetites in ways that are not right—this corresponds with the First Temptation; or to seek to please ourselves rather than to please God—which corresponds with the Second; or to try to gain success by unworthy means—which corresponds with the Third. Our Lord overcame the Tempter—His weapon was "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. vi. 17); and if we know our Bible well and use the lessons it teaches, we shall be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." "By Thy fasting and temptation, good Lord, deliver us."

Collect for the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Hymn 92: "Forty days and forty nights."

Lesson X. THE BAPTIST'S WITNESS TO OUR LORD. THE CALL OF SIX DISCIPLES

PREPARATION

Again we are going to hear about S. John the Baptist. We have had two Lessons about him already—No. II, which told of his birth, and No. VIII, which treated of his preaching to the people and baptizing those who came to him. He had evidently got a great hold upon the people, and might have used his popularity to win honour and position for himself, but that was far from his thoughts; his only ambition was to prepare the way of Christ; he is spoken of by one of our old poets as

"The last and greatest herald of heaven's King."

PRESENTATION

The Baptist's Witness to the People and to the Priests and Levites.—Read S. John i. 15–28. We have just called the Baptist *a herald*—one who goes before a king to proclaim his title to the people's homage. Note how he does this in verse 15, witnessing to Our Lord as superior to himself: He came *after* the Baptist because He was born later, and began His ministry later; but He was *before* the Baptist because "He was in the beginning with God, and was God" (S. John i. 1, 2).

The Jews of Jerusalem, hearing of the Baptist's wondrous preaching, had sent priests and Levites (their ministers of religion) to inquire about his preaching, and find out who he was. They were inclined to think that he was the Christ—the Messiah Whom they expected to come—but this he denied. Perhaps then he was Elias, or Elijah, the great prophet who was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings ii.). Malachi (iv. 5) had left a prophecy which was taken to mean that Elijah should come to earth again, but the Baptist said it was not he. Perhaps then he was the prophet that Moses had foretold (Deut. xviii. 15). But again he said "No." Who was he then? And when he had to answer, he said he was only *a voice*—the voice that Isaiah had spoken of (xl. 3)—he meant that *he* counted for nothing; it was only his message that mattered, and the purpose of that message was to witness to Christ; he was not worthy to do for Him even the slave's work, unloosing His shoe's latchet (or lace)—so great was the Baptist's humility.

Compare with this the incident related in iii. 23–26—"He must increase, but I must decrease."

Some whom the Baptist led to follow Christ.—Read S. John i. 29–42. Note the title which the Baptist gave to Our Lord—THE LAMB OF GOD. Those who heard it would think of the Passover lamb, or of the lambs sacrificed daily in the Temple, and would see that these typical offerings had their fulfilment in Him. *Who taketh away the sin of the world:* that was His work. We can understand it because we remember what the Angel said (S. Matt. i. 21); but they hardly could unless they remembered Isa. liii. 6, 7. One day two of the Baptist's disciples heard this and followed Jesus, and at His invitation accompanied Him to His dwelling, and spent the evening in His company. Who were these? One was S. Andrew; we can hardly doubt the other was S. John the Evangelist, who wrote the account of what happened, but modestly made no mention of himself. Then note how S. Andrew, having found the Messiah, for whose coming every devout Jew longed and prayed, straightway searched out his brother Simon, that he might share the blessed discovery; and he when brought to Jesus received the new name of *Cephas*, or *Peter*, the *rock man*, a prophecy of his calling to be the rock on which Christ would build His Church. Whom would S. John be likely to bring to Jesus? Surely *his* brother James.

Other Disciples called by Our Lord Himself.—Read S. John i. 43–51. Our Lord was now leaving the district of the lower Jordan and intending to return to Galilee. On His way He summoned *Philip* to follow Him. Philip was not content to enjoy his privileges alone; he calls another to share them—*Nathanael*, probably the same as *Bartholomew* the Apostle. What was his distinguishing characteristic? See verse 47: *guilelessness*—simplicity of character. Our Lord saw into his character, and showed that He had seen also in what way Nathanael was occupied before His call. He was promised greater wonders than these—see verse 51—which had its fulfilment (in part) at Our Lord's Ascension.

APPLICATION

We may note two Lessons out of many which our reading suggests:

(i) S. John the Baptist as an example of Humility. Read Jer. xlv. 5.

(ii) S. Andrew as an example of "the Missionary spirit": we receive what God teaches us, not to hoard for ourselves alone, but to pass it on to others. It is for this reason that S. Andrew's Tide is appointed as a time of special intercession for Foreign Missions.

Collect for SS. Philip and James's Day.

Hymn 358: "From Greenland's icy mountains."

Lesson XI. OUR LORD'S FIRST MIRACLE. THE FIRST CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

PREPARATION

We are going to read to-day the story of one of Our Lord's Miracles —the first He wrought—turning water into wine. You have often heard and read of Miracles without thinking exactly what they were; you can mention some besides the one just spoken of—raising the dead; giving sight to the blind; cleansing the leper, &c. Now all these are *wonderful works*—that is the meaning of the word *miracle;* but we should not call *all* wonderful works miracles. The electric telegraph, a flying-machine, a steam-engine are "wonderful works," but we do not call them miracles. So if we are asked what a miracle is, we might say: It is a wonderful work, outside the course of nature (as we know it), wrought by the Power of God for some special purpose. We will think of this whenever we have a Lesson on a Miracle, and try to apply it to what we read.

PRESENTATION

The Marriage Feast at Cana.—Read S. John ii. 1–5. Find Cana in the Map; note its position relatively to Nazareth. Our Lord there *on the third day* after the call of Philip and Nathanael [last Lesson]. A marriage feast—probably of some relatives or friends of Our Lord. The guests—at least six that you know by name. Perhaps these were unexpected, and the supply provided was not sufficient: the wine ran short; the Blessed Virgin brought this to Our Lord's notice (verse 3). It would shame the hosts not to have enough for their guests; the Blessed Virgin sympathised with them, and put their case before her Son. Read verse 4. What an answer! It seemed hardly respectful, but Our Lord could never have failed in respect to His Blessed Mother. The word *Woman*, which sounds to us harsh, is more like our word *Lady;* but the words, *What have I to do with thee?* had in them a gentle reproof; He must choose His own time (His hour) for doing His wonderful works. [*Cp.* what He said eighteen years before (S. Luke ii. 49).] Mark next the Blessed Virgin's words to the servants (verse 5). She left all to Him, sure that He would do what was right.

The Miracle.—Read S. John ii. 6–12. The six great jars, holding as much as the big casks you see on brewer's drays—the six of them,

more than 100 gallons, usually filled with water for the ceremonial washings of the guests, now refilled up to the brim. The servants were told to draw from one of the jars, and what they drew was not water but wine. The governor, or ruler of the feast, what we should call the chairman: his praise of the wine (verse 10).

So Our Lord *manifested forth His glory*—showed that He was something greater than the carpenter of Nazareth which He seemed to be.

The Cleansing of the Temple.—Read S. John ii. 13-25. Our Lord is at Jerusalem again—in the Temple—recall His visit when He was twelve years old (Lesson VII)—no doubt He had been there often in the meantime; the Jews were required to go up at the three great Feasts (Deut. xvi. 16): now was the Feast of the Passover. The profanation of the Temple courts—made "a place of merchandise" (or trade); animals to be sold for sacrifice; foreign money to be exchanged for Jewish money [because the foreign money bore the image of the Roman Emperor with an idolatrous inscription, and so could not be offered to God]. Our Lord's indignation at this profanation of His Father's House; the crowd of sellers, awed by the dignity of His manner driven out of the Temple. The questioning of Our Lord's Authority; His mysterious answer (verse 19), which we shall find later made the ground of an accusation against Him.

APPLICATION

Lessons to be drawn from what we have read (i) Our Lord's sympathy with human joy, as shown by His presence at the Feast; (ii) His Power over Nature, in turning the water into wine—"the conscious water saw its Lord and *blushed*" (turned red); (iii) Jesus keeps the best of His gifts till the last (S. John ii. 10). The world gives many pleasures to the young, youth and health and strength, but it is God Who gives to His servants the joy of a happy old age—

> "Such calm old age as Conscience pure
> And self-commanding hearts secure."

(iv) Our Lord's zeal for His Father's House teaches us reverence and affection for the Churches built for God's glory, and for the worship of His people.

Collect for the Second Sunday after Easter.

Hymn 190: "Jesu, Thou Joy of loving hearts."

Lesson XII. NICODEMUS TAUGHT BY OUR LORD

PREPARATION

Our Lord's first disciples were fishermen, simple folk who had not had much education, and most of His teaching was given to men of this type—" the common people heard Him gladly " (S. Mark xii. 37). The men in high position, the priests and teachers of the Law, for the most part turned their backs upon Him, and so missed the blessing of His teaching. Read S. Matt. xi. 25. But we shall hear to-day of one of those " wise and prudent " who did come to Jesus for instruction, and was not sent empty away.

PRESENTATION

Nicodemus and his Visit to Our Lord.—Read S. John iii. 1–3. Notice first that Nicodemus was a *Pharisee ;* we shall find the Pharisees very often condemned, and we shall hear very severe things spoken of them by Our Lord. Many of them were hypocrites, hiding bad lives under a cloak of religion, but they were not all bad : Nicodemus was one exception [S. Paul also was brought up as a Pharisee] ; and then that he was *a ruler of the Jews, i.e.* he belonged to the great Council (or Parliament) of the Jews called the Sanhedrin, consisting of seventy persons who had considerable authority and power amongst the Jews. He came to Jesus *by night.* Why ? Partly because he was too proud to come *by day*—he, a great man, to come to this humble teacher ! —partly from fear lest he should be censured, and perhaps deprived of his place in the Sanhedrin : but he *did* come, thereby showing a teachable spirit. He acknowledged Jesus as a Teacher (Rabbi) come from God [His miracles were a proof of this], and so he came to Him for instruction. But Our Lord did not want merely scholars or disciples listening to His teaching ; He wanted men fit to " enter into the kingdom of God," to be subjects of the Divine Society which He came to found ; and for this a man must undergo a great change, a *new birth :* " Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

The New Birth.—Read S. John iii. 4–8. Our Lord was speaking figuratively : the change a man must undergo is as great as the change from death to life, or the passage from " out of nowhere into somewhere." Nicodemus took His words literally, as meaning that a man had to begin again his natural life. This, he said, was impossible ;

and then Our Lord taught him that this new birth He spoke of was *of water and the Spirit:* it was not a natural birth but a spiritual birth, a change wrought within, and the instrument of this change was *water*, which Our Lord later appointed as "the outward and visible sign" of the new birth. So He was preparing Nicodemus and those that came after for the institution of Holy Baptism, by which would be brought about "a death unto sin and a *new birth* unto righteousness." This change was mysterious, like the blowing of the wind, which man cannot account for. Nicodemus was perplexed; he asked, "How can these things be?" but he had got his lesson from the Divine Teacher, and we shall see how he profited by it.

Nicodemus the Champion of Justice.—Read S. John vii. 50–52. At a later time when Our Lord was teaching in Jerusalem, the chief Priests and Pharisees wished to have Our Lord arrested, but Nicodemus pleaded with them that they should hear His teaching and study His actions before they condemned Him; no doubt he remembered what he had learnt himself in that visit by night.

Nicodemus honouring the Sacred Body of Our Lord in Death.—Read S. John xix. 38–40. Nicodemus had by this time made a great advance; he was no longer afraid of the reproach of men; he joined himself with Joseph of Arimathæa in the last tribute of homage to the Body of Our Lord when it was taken down from the Cross.

APPLICATION

There are some hard sayings in the verses we have read. Nicodemus found them hard (verse 9), but he did not on that account put them aside as if they had no meaning; no doubt he kept them in mind and pondered over them [as the Blessed Virgin did with the mysterious words of the Angel (S. Luke ii. 19)]. Our Lord's disciples, and even His Blessed Mother, did not understand all that He said to them (see S. Luke ix. 45; and ii. 50): they were told to let His sayings "sink into their ears" (S. Luke ix. 44), and in due time they would get to know what they meant. So Our Lord's words to Nicodemus will have light thrown on them when we come to speak of Holy Baptism and "its inward and spiritual grace." Read S. John xvi. 12, 13.

Collect for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

Hymn 561: "With Christ we share a mystic grave."

Lesson XIII. IMPRISONMENT AND DEATH OF THE BAPTIST

PREPARATION

We may now follow to the end the career of this wonderful servant of God, whom Jesus Himself proclaimed to be the greatest, or amongst the greatest, of those "born of women." In doing this we shall have to pass out of the order of the chapters of the Gospels and collect from different places what is told of the circumstances which led to the death of the Baptist.

PRESENTATION

The Imprisonment of the Baptist.—Read S. Mark vi. 17–20. The Herod here mentioned was the son of the Herod who was reigning thirty years earlier at the time of Our Lord's birth. He is called by S. Luke *the tetrarch*, *i.e.* the ruler of a fourth part, because he ruled over one of the four parts into which his father's kingdom was divided. [Show Herod's dominions on Map.] His great sin was marrying—while his own wife was still alive—Herodias, the wife of his brother Herod Philip, who was alive. For this he was sternly rebuked by the Baptist [he had rebuked the common people, and did not shrink from reproving even a king]: thereby he incurred the hatred of the wicked Herodias. But Herod the king feared this humble, persecuted preacher of righteousness, because he recognised his goodness; and he feared the people also, who honoured John as a prophet (S. Matt. xiv. 5), so he "kept him safe" (verse 20, R.V.) from the malice of Herodias. This "safety" was only found in imprisonment, and the place of his imprisonment, we learn from a Jewish historian (Josephus), was the fortress of Machærus on the eastern side of the Dead Sea.

The Baptist's Inquiry sent from his Prison.—Read S. Luke vii. 18–23. What a change for the Baptist, who had been brought up in the free air of the desert, to be shut within the walls of a prison! There he heard from his disciples of the work which Our Lord was doing and the miracles He was working. "Was it right," he might perhaps ask, "that he who had been sent 'to prepare the way of the Lord' should be left to pine in this desert fortress?" He sent two disciples to ask Our Lord Himself if He really was the "Coming One," to Whom he had borne witness. It was an instance of the despondency to

which even good men are liable in times of disappointment. Notice how Our Lord answered this inquiry of His servant (verses 21–23): He worked the miracles that the prophets had foretold the Messiah should work (*e.g.* Isa. xxxv. 5, 6), and left John to draw his own conclusions. Read verse 23 in R.V. John for the moment had "stumbled"—doubted—because his life's work seemed fruitless.

Our Lord's Witness to the Baptist's Greatness.—Read S. Luke vii. 24–30. The people must not be left in doubt as to the greatness of the Baptist; he was no uncertain waverer (like the bulrush shaken by the wind), no flattering courtier (he had reproved even Herod), but a prophet of God, the greatest of the prophets, fulfilling the words spoken by Isaiah and Malachi. [Show clearly that a prophet is one who *speaks for* and *speaks forth*, as well as one who speaks before or foretells.]

The Death of the Baptist.—Read S. Mark vi. 21–29. At last the wicked Herodias got her evil way. Herod's birthday banquet—the daughter of Herodias (by her former husband), Salome, dancing before the court party (a shameful thing for one in her position, according to the judgment of those times)—Herod's rash promise—the mother's fiendish prompting—the daughter's ghastly prize. So the infamous woman had her revenge; yet after his death the memory of the Baptist had power to vex and awe the mind of Herod (S. Mark vi. 14).

APPLICATION

The example of the Baptist is spoken of in the Collect for the Feast of his Nativity, 24th June, as something for us to follow. After his example we may: (i) *Constantly speak the truth*—we know how difficult this is—without fear or favour. King Alfred was known as the Truth-speaker. Nothing nobler than to be known always to speak the truth. (ii) *Boldly rebuke vice*—we have seen how John did this even when a king and a queen were the offenders. When wrong things are done or evil words spoken in our presence, we should hold aloof from them, and rebuke by "silence" and sometimes by words. (iii) "Patiently suffer"—S. John suffered imprisonment and death. We may suffer in little ways for speaking truth and rebuking wrong; we may lose friends and incur unpopularity and perhaps get laughed at, but let us remember that "He who sides with God is sure to win."

Collect for S. John the Baptist's Day.

Hymn 542: "Stand up! stand up for Jesus!"

Lesson XIV. OUR LORD'S PREACHING IN GALILEE. AT NAZARETH

PREPARATION

The Evangelists do not tell the story of Our Lord's Life always in chronological order, *i.e.* in the order of time; they pass from one incident to another as it comes into their minds, or as they were guided by the Holy Spirit of God. And when we compare the accounts in the different Gospels, it is sometimes difficult to know in what place to put the events that are recorded. We shall not be able in these Lessons to get in all the incidents of Our Lord's Life; we must select those which stand out with special prominence, and one of these is a specimen of Our Lord's manner of teaching.

PRESENTATION

The Preaching at Nazareth.—Read S. Luke iv. 16–21: "Nazareth, where He had been brought up." Recall the thirty years spent there in quiet and seclusion: Our Lord following a lowly trade, and thought of by the villagers as only one of themselves. But He had been away for some time; He had been to Jerusalem and elsewhere; He had passed through great experiences, some of which might be known to them, but others [like His Temptation] known only to Himself. He comes back a Teacher, asserting Himself and making great claims. We shall see what they were, and how they were received by His own people. The place of His teaching was the Synagogue—the Meeting House (as the word means), a Jewish place of worship—not like the Temple at Jerusalem, where alone sacrifices were offered, but a place where Holy Scripture was read and explained and Prayers said. Our Lord was asked to take part in the Service. He was not what we should call a priest or minister; He belonged by birth to the tribe of Judah, while Jewish priests and ministers were all of the tribe of Levi. His part was to read the Lesson for the day (as we should call it), which was taken from the Prophet Isaiah (lxi. 1, 2). Having read this, He said: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." He asserted that the Prophet spoke years before of Him, and that in Him the prophecy was fulfilled. "The Spirit of the Lord" had been poured out upon Him at His Baptism; "the Lord had anointed Him," and so He was the Messiah or Christ, the Anointed One of God.

The Amazement of the People.—Read S. Luke iv. 22–27. No wonder that they were amazed, that the One Whom they had known as the son of Joseph the carpenter should claim to be the Messiah. He knew what they were thinking, expressed in the proverb, "Physician, heal thyself," which is very much like our proverb, "Charity begins at home." Our Lord had wrought miracles elsewhere; why should He not do the same for the people of His own town? Then Our Lord pointed out (verse 24) that it is the usual thing for a prophet or a great man not to be much accounted of amongst his own people. And He told of the two great Prophets, Elijah and Elisha: each of these had wrought miracles for people in other lands, which they had not wrought for their own countrymen—Elijah for the widow of Zarephath (or Sarepta), see 1 Kings xvii.; and Elisha for Naaman the Syrian, see 2 Kings v. [Note that the Old Testament names are differently spelt in the New: this is because the New Testament represents the Greek form of the names, while the Old Testament represents the Hebrew.]

The Fury of the People.—Read S. Luke iv. 28–30. What was it that moved their wrath? Our Lord's teaching that *Gentiles*—people who were not Jews—should come into the blessings and privileges which the Jews had rejected. They would have thrown Him down from the hill on which Nazareth was built, but He awed them by the Majesty of His Presence and passed through the midst of them, leaving Nazareth, His old home, perhaps never to return to it. [Read S. John i. 11.]

APPLICATION

One lesson taught us is not to despise people because of their humble origin or their lowly birth. The Nazarenes despised Our Lord because He was, as they thought, the son of Joseph the carpenter (verse 22). S. Peter says, "Honour all men" (1 Peter ii. 17), for what they *are*, not for their birth, or wealth, or social position only. Then notice how inconsistent the Nazarenes were: they wondered at Our Lord's gracious words (verse 22), and yet they were ready to kill Him when His teaching offended their prejudices (verses 28 and 29): we should be ready to take reproof from our parents or teachers, as well as what is pleasing to us.

Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

Hymn 331: "We are but little children weak."

Lesson XV. CHRIST HEALING THE SICK—THOSE POSSESSED WITH DEVILS

PREPARATION

We read in many places in the Gospels of poor people said to be "possessed by *devils*": the name is not the same as that given to the great enemy of our souls, the Devil, who tempted Our Blessed Lord and still tempts us. The *devils* we shall speak of in this Lesson were demons, or evil spirits, powers of darkness, whom God suffered to get (for a time) a mastery over the souls and bodies of men; sometimes the person possessed was like a raving lunatic (see S. Mark v. 2–5); sometimes possession showed itself in what we should call "fits" or epilepsy (see S. Mark ix. 18); sometimes in loss of speech or hearing, or in blindness (see S. Matt. xii. 22); sometimes in filthy and degrading habits ("a spirit of an *unclean* devil," S. Luke iv. 33). We will read to-day how Our Lord dealt with one (or more) of these poor sufferers. He is spoken of sometimes as "The Great Physician"; His work was to heal all the diseases both of our souls and bodies.

PRESENTATION

The Man with an Unclean Spirit.—Read S. Mark v. 1–5. Our Lord had crossed over the Sea of Galilee and come to the other (*i.e.* the eastern) side—see Map—and had come into the country of the *Gadarenes* (so named from *Gadara*, the capital of the district). Here a fearful sight met Him: a man—naked, raving, dwelling in some graveyard; so strong that no chains could bind him, so fierce that no man could tame him; in his frenzy gashing himself with stones. [S. Matthew speaks of two of these *demoniacs;* S. Mark and S. Luke confine themselves to one—probably the worst case.]

Christ the Healer.—Read S. Mark v. 6–9. The evil spirits recognised One mightier than themselves and did homage to Him (verse 6); the man, under their influence, running and worshipping Him, at the same time rebelling against His power and authority (verse 7). Picture the perfectly good and pure and holy Christ confronted with this poor raving, unquiet spirit. He in His Majesty had awed the infuriated Nazarenes (Lesson XIV); He had just before stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee (S. Mark iv. 39); now He will assert

His power over "the unruly wills and affections of sinful men." Note how He begins His work of healing: "What is thy name?" (verse 9). He wanted to bring back the man to himself: the words that he had spoken did not represent his true self; they were the utterances of the evil spirit, who said his name was *Legion* [the number of men in a Roman regiment, usually 6000, taken to represent a host without number]. So many lords had this poor man when Jesus called him back to his true self.

The Devils and the Swine.—Read S. Mark v. 10–13. We do not understand the ways of that dark spirit world to which these evil beings belonged; but we are told that in some strange, mysterious way they were suffered to enter into a herd of 2000 swine, and these, goaded into frenzy, rushed down into the sea and so perished.

The Gadarenes and the Healed Man.—Read S. Mark v. 14–20. The Gadarenes, hearing of what was done, begged Our Lord to depart out of their country; they had lost the herd of swine, and they thought more of this than they did of the freeing of their fellow-townsman from his dreadful condition. The man who had been healed would fain have gone with Our Lord: he feared perhaps lest those dreadful spirits should come back and torment him; he felt sure that he would be safe if he could remain at the Saviour's side. But Jesus gave him a work to do (read verse 19); in doing that work he would be best protected against the assaults of the evil ones.

APPLICATION

Is there any such thing as "possession by the devil" now? We cannot perhaps answer this question. When Our Lord was on earth ("the Light of the World"), as the Light was the brightest so the shadows were darkest, and then these evil spirits showed their power. But when we think of the frenzy of the drunkard, of the horrible cruelties of the sensual, of the fiendish malice of the jealous and envious, we cannot doubt that evil spirits are still in our midst. Remember what was said of Saul when he fell away from God: "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him" (1 Samuel xvi. 14).

Collect for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

Hymn 20: "At even ere the sun was set."

Lesson XVI. CHRIST HEALING THE SICK—LEPERS

PREPARATION

Read S. Mark i. 29–34. These verses tell us of a great number of miracles of healing performed by Our Blessed Lord; only one of these described in any detail (verses 29–31)—the healing of Peter's wife's mother who was suffering from fever. Notice, in her case, a double miracle: first, she was cured of her fever, and, second, the weakness that follows fever was removed, so that she was at once able to wait upon her guests. This healing work was very tiring, and Our Lord sought refreshment for His weary spirit in prayer (verse 35). But He was not suffered to rest. Simon Peter (always forward in pressing his wishes upon Our Lord) and others went after Him, and brought Him back to His work of preaching and healing.

PRESENTATION

The Leper.—Read S. Mark i. 40–42. Leprosy is a dreadful disease, which was, and still is, common in Eastern countries; the limbs, one after another, fell off as they were attacked with the disease. The leper was separated from his friends and relations and compelled to live alone, or in the company of his fellow-sufferers, outside the cities or villages; he was regarded as unclean, and any contact with him brought uncleanness upon others. Compare the words of Hymn 369: "The leper, with his tainted life."

One of these poor sufferers ventured to come to Our Lord, though in doing this he was transgressing the Law. He had heard of His works of healing elsewhere, and believed that He had the power, if He willed, to make him clean. Notice *how* Our Lord healed him: "He put forth His hand and touched him"; he was not afraid of contagion. His touch was the sign of sympathy, and it brought healing to the leper.

The Charge Given to the Man who was Healed.—Read S. Mark i. 43–45. First he was to go and show himself to the priest. The Law of Moses laid down rules for those who were cleansed from leprosy (Lev. xiv.); they had to offer certain sacrifices and go through some forms of ceremonial cleansing: all these must be performed by this leper that there might be no question as to his cure. At the same time he was strictly charged to keep secret the means of his cure. This injunction he disregarded (verse 45); no doubt he wished to give praise to his Healer, but the effect was to prevent Our Lord

from going into the city, and thereby His work was hindered. [Obedience is best, even when we cannot understand the reason of a command.]

The Healing of Other Lepers.—Read S. Luke xvii. 12–14. Other lepers were at different times healed by Our Lord (S. Matt. xi. 5). S. Luke tells of a body of ten who were thus cured. Their sad condition had brought them together; they had heard of other cures effected by the Great Healer, and they ask for His help. We are not told that Our Lord touched them, as He did the one leper whom we have read about in S. Mark; but He directed them to go to the priests, as though they were already cleansed; and it was *as they went* that they were cleansed (verse 14).

The Grateful One and the Ungrateful Nine.—Read S. Luke xvii. 15–19.

> " Ten cleans'd, and only one remain!
> Who would have thought our nature's stain
> Was dyed so foul, so deep in grain? "

So the *Christian Year* comments on this story. Ingratitude seems to us one of the most base of faults; we can hardly think of anything which would excuse the nine for not " returning to give glory to God." The one who did return was a Samaritan, one whom the Jews would despise as an alien; but he had a better disposition than the others, and reaped a greater blessing. He was " made whole " in soul as well as in body.

APPLICATION

" Miracles are acted Parables," *i.e.* they teach by acts, as Parables teach by words. Leprosy is a type, or figure, of sin; and Our Lord in cleansing the lepers showed how He " takes away the sin of the world." Read again S. Mark i. 41. So Our Lord was " moved with compassion " for men tainted with sin; He " put forth His hand and touched " all the race of men when " He took our Nature upon Him "; thus by His sympathy and condescension He healed all the diseases of our souls. Do we " give glory to God " for this? If not, we miss the fuller blessing which the one grateful leper received.

Collect for the Feast of S. Luke the Evangelist.

Hymn 369: " Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old."

Lesson XVII. THE HEALING OF THE CRIPPLED MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA

PREPARATION

Who has seen a cripple—a man walking with crutches, because he has lost the use of his legs; a boy or a girl drawn about in an invalid chair, lying flat because of injury to the spine? The sadness of it! In this country there are Hospitals for these sufferers. Before Christ came Hospitals were almost unknown [it was the "great Physician" that taught care for the bodies, as well as for the souls of men]; and so in the streets, at the gate of the Temple (Acts iii. 2) and elsewhere, there were these cripples "asking alms," *i.e.* begging.

PRESENTATION

A Crowd of these Cripples.—Open Bibles at S. John v., read silently verses 1–18.—"A great multitude of impotent folk" (verse 3): some having lost their sight, some their power of walking, some with their limbs withered or paralysed.

Where were these gathered?—At a pool in Jerusalem (verse 2), well known to those for whom S. John wrote, called *Bethesda* [*i.e.* the House of Mercy].

Why were they gathered there?—Because the waters of this pool had healing power (read verse 4). Refer to the *waters* at Buxton and Bath and elsewhere, to which people resort for the cure of rheumatism and like ailments. At certain times the waters were *moved*, *i.e.* bubbled up, and gave out gases which might be instrumental in healing. [The Jews said that this *moving of the waters* was due to an Angel that came down and stirred them; perhaps they were right. Many believe that God uses His holy Angels to do His work in Nature.]

One of these Cripples, who is the subject of the story. How long had he been afflicted? (see verse 5). Think of the sadness of his case—thirty-eight years, more than half a lifetime; not born lame, as some are, but lame, perhaps, in youth [no games for him such as boys and young men love], lame in manhood [and so unable to earn his own living]. Besides he was *friendless* (verse 7).

Our Lord, the sympathising Saviour, picked out this one for the exercise of His healing power. *Willest thou to be made whole?* What

a question to be put to a man who had suffered so much for so many years, who had almost lost all hope! No chance even of getting the benefit of bathing in the pool. But One, the Lord of Nature, mightier than the Angel, said: *Rise, take up thy bed and walk.* Note that the man was called upon to do his part—cripple though he was; he must exercise his will, make the effort, which would be so difficult after these many years of helplessness, carry the bed (the mat or palliasse) on which he lay ["Heaven helps them that help themselves"]. He took the Saviour at His word, and *was made whole.*

What followed the Healing.—(*a*) It excited the anger of the Jews against our Lord because it was done on the Sabbath Day, and because the man broke the law of the Sabbath ("in it thou shalt do no manner of work") by carrying his bed on the Sabbath Day (read verses 10 and 16). Note His answer here: *My Father worketh hitherto* (*i.e.* even until now), *and I work* (verse 17). The Jews relied on the words in Gen. ii. 2: "God rested on the seventh day from all His work." Our Lord taught them that God still works *in* the world, as He had done before *on* the world; and that His own work of healing was a continuance and copy of the work of God; so, the Jews said, *making Himself equal with God*, and we know that He was *equal to the Father.*

(*b*) The healed man is found *in the Temple* (verse 14). Why there? No doubt to thank God for his cure. Our Lord would certainly approve of this, but He bids him *sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*, seeming to imply that his lameness was due to sin, which he must forsake [we are to "show forth our thankfulness not only with our lips but in our lives"].

APPLICATION

Moral Cripples.—Those who have formed bad habits, so that their wills are powerless; who cannot say "No" to things which they know will prove their ruin [*e.g.* the drunkard, who cannot pass the public-house], who cannot steadily follow the course which they know leads to their well-being [*e.g.* the habitually lazy who will not, and therefore cannot work]. Can these be cured? There is a *Bethesda* still—a House of Mercy—the Church of God, where Jesus may be found; the will can be strengthened by the word of Jesus.

Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

Hymn 368: "Thou to Whom the sick and dying."

Lesson XVIII. THE JEWISH OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH DAY

PREPARATION

Our last Lesson told of a miracle of healing wrought by Our Blessed Lord. What was that? On what day was it wrought? How did the Jews regard this? As a breaking of the law of the Sabbath (see S. John v. 10, 16). Read the law of the Sabbath in Comm. IV (Exod. xx. 10). To-day the same subject of Sabbath observance comes up again.

PRESENTATION

Read S. Mark ii. 23–28. The disciples, passing through the corn-fields, plucked ears of corn and rubbed them in their hands (S. Luke vi. 1) to separate the grain from the chaff, thus breaking the letter of the Law of the Sabbath; hence the Pharisees' complaint (verse 24). Our Lord's answer:

(*a*) *What David did.*—See 1 Sam. xxi. 6. Once in a time of great necessity he took of the sacred loaves (the "shew bread"), which only the priests were allowed to eat, and gave them to his men to save them from dying. What had this to do with Sabbath observance? Nothing directly; David did not break the Sabbath, but he set aside a *ceremonial law* (*i.e.* a law relating to the outward acts of religion) in order to keep a higher law and save the lives of God's people. So Our Lord taught the ceremonial law of the Sabbath might, *in cases of necessity*, be set aside.

(*b*) *What the Priests did* continually in the Temple (S. Matt. xii. 5): offering sacrifices, commanded by the Law, on the Sabbath Day. This was doing work, and laborious work. So Our Lord taught that the law of the Sabbath might be set aside, when a higher law, the law of religious worship, made it necessary.

(*c*) *What the Jews themselves did* on the Sabbath Day without being blamed for it (S. Matt. xii. 11): releasing a sheep from a pit into which it had fallen, and thus saving its life.

Thus Our Lord's teaching was that works of religion, of necessity, and of mercy might be done on the Sabbath Day—"Mercy is greater than sacrifice" (S. Matthew xii. 7, quoting Hosea vi. 6). "The Sabbath was made for man," to serve his needs and promote his good, and not to be a clog and hindrance to him. Our Lord, as the Son of Man,

the representative of the race, had the power to explain, and even to modify, the rule of Sabbath observance (S. Mark ii. 27, 28).

(*d*) *Our Lord taught the same lesson by a Miracle of Healing*—the cure of the man with a withered [*i.e.* a paralysed] hand. Read S. Mark iii. 1–5. This miracle was wrought in the synagogue, the place of worship. Note Our Lord's *anger* (verse 5). What caused this anger? He was grieved at the *hardness of heart* shown by the Jews: they seemed to have had no pity for the poor sufferer, but to have thought only of keeping the law in their own hard and narrow interpretation of it.

Why did Our Lord thus provoke the Jews by His teaching about the Sabbath and by working miracles which led men to break the Sabbath rule? Because they had made the Commandment of God *of none effect* by their teaching and practice. The Sabbath was given by God for man's good ("made for man"); they pressed its rule to hinder works of mercy and necessity.

APPLICATION

What may we learn from to-day's Lesson?

(*a*) How we should keep Christian Holy Days, and especially the Lord's Day (Sunday). Our *Lord's Day* is not the same as the Jews' Sabbath: it is the first day of the week, not the seventh; it does not commemorate God's rest from Creation, but the Resurrection of Our Lord from the dead. But it is like the Jewish Sabbath in being a day of rest [*Sabbath* means *rest*], and as demanding the surrender of a portion of our time to the special service of God. We are to "serve Him truly *all* the days of our life"; we set apart the first day of the week as an acknowledgment that all our days are His.

Sunday is a day of Rest and Worship. The day has many hours in it, and a proper share of these should be given to the worship of God. The Lord's Feast is the Holy Communion, and that should be kept on the Lord's Day.

(*b*) Learn the lesson which Our Lord taught in the words of the prophet: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Our keeping of Sunday, our Church-going, and all our acts of religion are worthless in God's sight if they are not accompanied with deeds of mercy—kind words and kind acts towards our fellow-men. Sunday should be a day of special kindness and consideration for others.

Collect for Quinquagesima.

Hymn 36: "O Day of rest and gladness."

Lesson XIX. OUR LORD'S APOSTLES

PREPARATION

We shall often hear of Our Lord's Apostles, and we shall spend this Lesson in learning something about them and the purpose for which they were appointed. The word *Apostle* means *one who is sent*, and in this respect is very like the word *Missionary;* but the title is commonly restricted to a number of men (at first twelve) sent by Our Lord to do His work. Distinguish "Apostle" from "Disciple," which means a *scholar*. Our Lord's disciples were all those who regularly listened to His teaching. We heard in a previous Lesson (No. X) of the call of six who were afterwards to be Apostles, and we read in S. Mark ii. 13, 14, of the call of Matthew, the Publican or Tax-Gatherer. But these were calls to Discipleship; the call to Apostleship came later. [S. Luke vi. 13 distinguishes the two.]

PRESENTATION

The Appointment of the Apostles.—Read S. Mark iii. 13–15. S. Luke (vi. 12) tells us that Our Lord "continued all night in prayer to God" before appointing the Twelve; it was a great choice, and Our Lord prepared Himself for it by a night of prayer. S. Mark (iii. 14) tells us that Our Lord chose the Twelve (i) to be His companions, to learn from His teaching and example; (ii) "that He might send them forth" to teach others what they had learnt of Him. He gave them also the power of working miracles, which would confirm their teaching (see S. Mark xvi. 20).

The Names of the Apostles.—Read S. Mark iii. 16–19. *Cp.* S. Matt. x. 2–4; S. Luke vi. 14–16; and Acts i. 13. In these four lists, we notice some things which are instructive: (i) The names are arranged in groups of four—always the same names in the same group. This seems to show that there were classes amongst Our Lord's Apostles, as there are classes in school—some standing higher than others. (ii) Simon Peter is always put first of the Twelve, and that seems to show that he was the leader, or chief, of the Body of Apostles. (iii) Judas Iscariot (in the first three lists) is always put last: we know why that was, and why his name does not appear in the fourth list. These Apostles were "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts iv. 13)—*i.e.* they were not great scholars—trained to be teachers of others; some of them were fishermen who had followed their occupation on the Sea of Galilee; Matthew, the tax-gatherer, was the only one who would be likely to have much money.

The Sending out of the Twelve.—Read S. Mark vi. 7–11. At a later period Our Lord sent out these Twelve; they then did the duty indicated in their name—they were Apostles or Missionaries bearing Christ's message to the people. S. Matthew (x. 7) tells us what the message was: it was the same message which the Baptist gave (S. Matt. iii. 2). The Apostles, like the Baptist, were "preparing the way of the Lord." The power of working miracles given to them on their appointment was renewed (verse 7). Note these points about the mission of the Twelve: (i) They were sent "by two and two." Our Lord recognised the value of companionship in work. He did not wish them to be lonely. (ii) Their work was to be for the time amongst the Jews only (S. Matt. x. 5, 6); later it was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (S. Mark xvi. 15). (iii) They were to depend for their maintenance on the hospitality of those to whom they preached—"the workman is worthy of his meat" (S. Matt. x. 10, 11). (iv) The peril of rejecting them. They were Christ's ministers, sent with His authority: "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me" (S. Luke x. 16); those who rejected them would incur a worse fate than that which befel Sodom and Gomorrah—the cities of the plain which God destroyed because of their wickedness (Gen. xix. 24, 25).

APPLICATION

Christ has "built His Church upon the foundation of the *Apostles* and Prophets" (Eph. ii. 20). We say in the Nicene Creed: "I believe one Catholic and *Apostolic* Church," which means that the Church holds the holy doctrines which the Apostles received from Christ and delivered to His people. Our Lord promised that they should "sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (S. Luke xxii. 30). Therefore we should pay them all honour; this we do by setting apart Holy Days, on which they are commemorated; and by dedicating Churches to God's service, and calling them after the names of His holy Apostles. Who are the successors to the Apostles? Show a table of the Archbishops of Canterbury or the Bishops of London, and so link on the ministry of the Church to-day with that of the Apostles.

Collect for SS. Simon and Jude's Day.

Hymn 430: "Th' eternal gifts of Christ the King."

Lesson XX. OUR LORD AS THE TEACHER. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

PREPARATION

Why did GOD become MAN? The Angel answered this when he told S. Joseph that He came "to save His people from their sins" (S. Matt. i. 21): "There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin." But He also came to teach men about God (read S. John i. 18), and to instruct us as to the duties which we owe to Him and to one another. He was called *Rabbi* (S. John i. 49), which is the Jewish name for *Teacher;* and He accepted the title of *Master*, which is the same as *Teacher*, when given to Him by His disciples (S. John xiii. 13). We are to think of Him as a "Teacher come from God" (S. John iii. 2). We have many of His discourses recorded in the Gospels, and we begin to-day to study one of these, which is called "The Sermon on the Mount."

PRESENTATION

The Beatitudes.—Read S. Matt. v. 1–12. The Jews were expecting "A Kingdom of God," of which the Messiah should be King. John the Baptist proclaimed that this Kingdom was at hand (S. Matt. iii. 2), and Our Lord Himself said the same (S. Mark i. 15). Compare S. John i. 49. A king must have subjects, and we may look upon these verses as telling us what kind of people are the subjects of Christ's Kingdom. ("Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.") In the kingdoms of the world (as men thought then) it was the proud and the rich and the self-assertive that were highly esteemed. See whom the Lord chooses for the honour of being His subjects—the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers. . . . No wonder He said: "My Kingdom is not of this world" (S. John xviii. 36). There are eight of these verses which begin with the word *Blessed* (verse 11 not being counted, because it is a repetition of verse 10); they are called the *Beatitudes*, from a Latin word which means *blessed*. This passage is the Gospel for All Saints' Day, and it seems to be chosen because it sets forth the character of those who are God's Saints—or Holy Ones.

Christ's People compared to Salt.—Read S. Matt. v. 13. Think what salt does: (i) It flavours our food; and so Christians should make their influence felt amongst those with whom they live. A

right-minded and right-acting boy or girl can make a whole class better by example and influence. (ii) It purifies—it is a disinfectant: and so Christians should counteract the evil that is in the world; they should not allow evil words to be spoken or evil deeds done without raising their voices against them. (iii) It preserves: meat and fish are salted to keep them from going bad, and so the good are the means of keeping God's judgments from falling upon the world (read Gen. xviii. 26).

Christ's People the Light of the World.—Read S. Matt. v. 14–16. Refer to S. John viii. 12: Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World." "He was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (S. John i. 9). But while He is the one, the original Light, all His people are to be lights also—they borrow their light from Him, and reflect it upon others [as the moon reflects the light of the sun]. Christians are compared to "a city set on a hill," conspicuous to all the country around; or to a lamp, which is not to be hidden "under a bushel" [*i.e.* under a wooden measure, which would obscure its light], but to be hung on a stand, from which it may give light to the house.

APPLICATION

Take the Beatitudes as describing the character of those whom God approves. We cannot go through them all; but take the first: "Blessed are *the poor in spirit*"—"He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes" (Ps. xv. 4)—it is the humble and lowly whom God approves and the proud whom He hates. And the sixth, "Blessed are *the pure in heart*" (verse 8): there is no place in God's Kingdom for the impure, those who speak or act uncleanly ["Keep my body in temperance, soberness and chastity"]; and the seventh, "Blessed are *the peace-makers*": the quarrelsome and contentious will not gain admission to the Kingdom.

Consider what is said about the influence which we have upon one another. It is in the power of everyone (the youngest boy or girl) to help to make others better: Let your light so shine before men . . . (verse 16).

Collect at beginning of Communion Service: "Almighty God, unto Whom all hearts be open . . ."

Hymn 243: "Lord, Thy Word abideth."

Lesson XXI. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*continued*). OUR LORD'S FULFILMENT OF THE LAW

PREPARATION

Our Lord, as we said in the last Lesson, came as a Teacher; but there were other teachers to whom the Jews for the most part looked for guidance and instruction; chief of these were the Scribes and Pharisees. The *Scribes* were the recognised expounders of the Old Testament Scriptures: probably they would mostly be Pharisees. The *Pharisees* were a sect or party of the Jews who prided themselves on a very strict observance of the Law in its most minute particulars. Read what Our Lord said about the "righteousness" which these people taught and professed to practise (S. Matt. v. 20). Those who would enter into Christ's Kingdom must keep the Law in a better way than they did.

PRESENTATION

Our Lord fulfilling the Law.—Read S. Matt. v. 17–20. The Law (specially the Ten Commandments) was given by God; and Our Lord did not come to destroy this Law, nor the teaching of the prophets based on this Law, but He came to *fulfil* the Law—that is, *to show its full meaning*. Of this Our Lord gives several examples.

The Sixth Commandment.—Read S. Matt. v. 21–26. The Commandment, as it was given "to them of old time," was: *Thou shalt not kill*. It forbade murder, the taking of the life of a brother man. But Our Lord shows that this Commandment means much more than on a surface-reading it seems to say. The Commandment may be broken (*a*) by causeless anger, (*b*) by contemptuous words (of which *Raca* is a specimen), (*c*) by insulting expressions (like "Thou fool!"). The Commandment, as interpreted by Our Lord, means: "Thou shalt not hate, nor scorn, nor despise," because such feelings have in them the nature of murder. Those who cherish them are not in a fit state to worship God (verses 23 and 24).

The Seventh Commandment.—Read S. Matt. v. 27–32. Our Lord shows that this Commandment also may be broken by sinful thoughts and unholy desires, as well as by acts of sin. The Jews had grown very lax in the observance of the sacredness of the marriage-bond;

they allowed Divorce, the separation of those whom God had joined together; this too was a breach of the Seventh Commandment.

The Law as to Oaths—the Ninth Commandment.—Read S. Matt. v. 33–37. The Jews allowed oaths to be taken on solemn occasions, as the Christian Law allows them to be taken in Courts of Justice or at other times when requisite. But though this may be admissible, Our Lord pointed out that there was something wrong in men to make oaths necessary. Christian men need only say "Yes" or "No" without any oath at all, and what they said should be believed (verse 37). A Christian man's word is just as binding as his oath.

The Jewish Law of Revenge and the Christian Law of Love.—Read S. Matt. v. 38–48. The Jewish Law was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour" (verse 43), but he thought of this as a command to love those of his own country or of his own religion or party; others he might hate, and retaliate on them for any wrong done (verse 38). Our Lord taught the higher Law, "Resist not evil" (verse 39); "Love your enemies" (verse 44). In doing this we are "imitators of God" (verses 45 and 48).

APPLICATION

Our Lord taught us to interpret or explain God's Commandments, *not only in the letter* but *in the spirit—i.e.* not only by what they say but by the underlying meaning. The laws of man can only touch our acts and sometimes our words, but the Law of God goes below these to "the thoughts and intents of the heart." All bad things are thought of in the heart before they can be put into words or brought forth in actions. So we must keep our minds pure. Bad thoughts come from reading bad books, or looking at bad pictures, or listening to the talk of bad people, and we must be on our guard against all these.

Sometimes we think it a fine and brave thing to "pay out" those who have shown us any unkindness or done us any harm. That was the Jew's way (verse 38), but it is not the Christian's way. Our Lord came to teach us "a new Commandment, that we should love one another" (S. John xiii. 34). Evil-doers have to be punished for their own sakes as well as for others, but we should be slow to punish and quick to forgive (see S. Matt. xviii. 21, 22).

For *Collect:* Response after Tenth Commandment in Service of Holy Communion.

Hymn 195: "O Love Divine, how sweet thou art."

Lesson XXII. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*continued*). THREE CHRISTIAN DUTIES

PREPARATION

Our Lord had taught who were the subjects of the Kingdom He came to set up on earth (Lesson XX), and what was the Law of that Kingdom (Lesson XXI). Now He goes on to speak of the Duties which Christians owe to God and to one another. These are specially Almsgiving, Prayer, and Fasting.

PRESENTATION

Almsgiving.—Read S. Matt. vi. 1–4 and 19–21. Alms are gifts to the poor and needy—sometimes in money, sometimes in food or clothing, or whatever they may need. No one can be a true follower of Jesus Christ without being prepared to help those who are in poverty or distress as far as his means allow. In S. Matt. xxv. 31–46, why were those on the right hand rewarded, those on the left hand punished? Why did the rich man (S. Luke xvi. 19–26) lose his soul? What spoilt the Almsgiving of the Pharisees? Ostentation ("showing off"): they gave that men might praise them; that was the reward they looked for, and they got it, but they missed God's reward. Our Lord called them *hypocrites* (verse 2), *i.e.* men who pretended to be what they were not. It is the motive with which they are done that makes actions good or bad. We should do whatever good deeds we can do *in secret*, except when doing them openly will help others (S. Matt. v. 16). One who gives from a good motive is laying up treasures in heaven: moths spoil clothes, and rust spoils metals, but nothing can spoil that which is laid up in heaven. Read Prov. xix. 17. [Emphasize the duty of Almsgiving for the Church and its work at home and abroad.]

Prayer.—Read S. Matt. vi. 5–15. Prayer is speaking to God, telling Him of our wants, and asking Him to give us that which we need. There were two faults in the Prayers of some of the religious professors in Our Lord's Day: one was *ostentation*, praying in public places "to be seen of men"; this was hypocrisy; in contrast to these, Christ's disciples are told to pray secretly (verse 6). It is not of course meant that we should not pray publicly, in our Churches or at outdoor services; only this must not be to get the character of being religious, just to be praised of men. The other was *vain repetition*—"as the heathen do" (see 1 Kings xviii. 26; Acts xix. 34).

We may say Prayers many times over, as Our Lord prayed the same Prayer thrice in the Garden of Gethsemane (S. Matt. xxvi. 44), only we must not think to be heard for our "much speaking": "Our Father knoweth." Then Our Lord taught them the model Prayer, "Our Father." Notice in this Prayer that in the first three petitions (verses 9 and 10) the predominant word is "Thy"—"Thy Name," "Thy Kingdom," "Thy Will"—*i.e.* they all look to God, and are prayers relating to Him. It is not till after, in the last four petitions (verses 11, 12, 13), that "us" comes in, and we put before God our own wants and needs. This is the right order, first God, then ourselves. [The opportunity may be taken of further explaining the Lord's Prayer, and teaching Prayers for private use.]

Fasting.—Read S. Matt. vi. 16-18. *Fasting* means going without food for some time [as Our Lord did in the Wilderness], or eating food which is less pleasant [as Daniel did (Dan. i. 12)]. It is one form of self-denial which we must all practise in some form or another. [The Forty Days of Lent and all the Fridays in the year are days of Fasting or Abstinence.] Here again the "hypocrites" spoilt their Fasting by making a show of it. [Suggest ways in which the Lenten and other Fasts may be kept.]

APPLICATION

Prayer is the breath of the Christian's life; we cannot live our natural life without breathing, no more can we live our spiritual life without praying. We all say Prayers, at home, at school, in church. Do we really *pray*, setting God before us, remembering that He hears us, bringing our wants to Him as a child does to father or mother? Read our Lord's promise of an answer to Prayer given in this same Sermon on the Mount (S. Matt. vii. 7, 8).

It has been said that "Almsgiving and Fasting are the wings of holy Prayer," which means that we cannot pray rightly unless we are loving and unselfish and self-denying.

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the great God Who loveth us
He made and loveth all."

Collect for the Third Sunday after Trinity.

Hymn 247: "Lord, teach us how to pray aright."

Lesson XXIII. OUR LORD'S TEACHING BY PARABLES. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

PREPARATION

We all love to hear stories; and the people to whom Our Lord spoke loved them still more, because they had not the abundance of books that we have, and were thus dependent for their lessons on Nature (the world around them) and on the things that happened in their everyday life. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning underlying it; it is something like the fables which we have all read or heard, but not quite the same, because in a parable all is quite natural, and we only have to draw out its meaning; but in fables there are usually things which are unnatural—animals talking, &c.—brought in to point out some moral lesson. Compare the use of a parable with that of a legend and an allegory. Give examples: Longfellow's "Legend Beautiful," and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

PRESENTATION

The Sower and the Seed.—Read S. Mark iv. 1–9. Picture Our Lord on the Sea of Galilee in a boat, pushed out a little way from the shore; the multitudes standing round, who had come to listen to His teaching. On a hillside, on the margin of the lake, was a man sowing seed, and Our Lord told the people to look at him, to notice what he was doing, and to learn from this simple incident of common life lessons about the Kingdom of Heaven, God's dealings with men and the response they make to Him. The *Sower* was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the *seed* was His word, the truths He taught. [The Clergy and Teachers are sowers under Him, sowing His seed in the hearts of men.]

The Seed by the Wayside (verse 4).—"Look!" Our Lord seemed to say, "how some of the seed is wasted; it is shed on the hard-trodden pathway, and the birds swoop down upon it and eat it up." That is a figure of the teaching which is given to the indifferent and careless [boys and girls who don't attend]; the teaching is good, but it is wasted; it never gets beyond their ears; it never reaches their minds and hearts; and Satan, like a foul bird, devours it (verse 15). The penalty on those who *won't* hear is that they *shan't* hear.

The Seed on the Stony Ground (verse 5).—"Look again at the seed falling on what looks like good ground, but it is only good on the

surface; an inch below is the hard rock; the seed will spring up all the more quickly because it does not go far down. But it has no deep roots to get moisture and food for the plant, and so as soon as the sun gets up the plant will be scorched." This represents people who are what we call "shallow" or superficial—boys and girls who learn quickly perhaps, but as quickly forget; they may be quick and smart, but they are only attentive when the Lesson pleases them, and they readily give in under difficulties (verses 16 and 17).

The Seed amongst the Thorns (verse 7).—"There again the ground looks all right, but, unknown to the sower, there are roots of noxious weeds left in the soil, and, when the good seed springs up, they spring up with it, and hinder its growth and at last kill it." This represents people who have good intentions and make a good beginning, but are driven back by bad influences and bad example—boys and girls who begin well and do well up to a point, but are deterred by ridicule or evil companionships (verses 18 and 19).

The Seed on the Good Ground (verse 8).—But while a good deal of the seed was wasted through falling on ground that would not promote its growth, there was much that fell on good ground and brought forth abundant fruit. So we hope that many hearers in Church and scholars in School receive the word "in an honest and good heart" (S. Luke viii. 15), and bring forth "the fruit of good living."

APPLICATION

Learn first how much instruction there is in Nature if we only keep our eyes and ears open to it;

> "Thou, Who hast given me eyes to see
> And love this sight so fair,
> Give me a heart to find out Thee,
> And read Thee everywhere."

The seed is the same for all of us: how different is the result! What are the things which hinder the growth of the seed? Indifference, Inattention, Want of Thoroughness, Distraction (giving our minds to other things), Evil Influences from without. How disappointing it is to have a tree which has no fruit on it! How still more disappointing a fruitless, wasted life. Refer to S. Luke xiii. 6–9.

Collect for the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.

Hymn 386: "The Sower went forth sowing."

Lesson XXIV. THREE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

PREPARATION

The parable is a form of teaching which is intended to set people thinking—"What does it mean?" It is much better for us to find out the answer ourselves than to have it told to us. We are surprised that Our Lord's disciples even should have had to ask Him the "heavenly meaning" of these earthly stories, when it seems to us so clear. But at any rate they did *want to know*, while there were others who didn't know and didn't care to know. See Our Lord's words in S. Matt. xiii. 10–13: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given"—*i.e.* if you have a desire to learn, God will teach you; and everything that you learn will lead up to some lesson beyond. There are in all seven parables in this thirteenth chapter of S. Matthew, all telling us something about the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God, how God works in the world. We will take two or three of them to-day.

PRESENTATION

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares.—Read S. Matt. xiii. 24–30. "An enemy," some ill-disposed neighbour, sowing tares (a noxious weed) in the farmer's field. At first no one knew of this villainous deed; it only came to light when the good seed put forth its blade, and the tares grew up with it. The servants proposed to pull up the tares, but this must not be done till the harvest; then the tares would be plucked up and burned, and the wheat gathered into the barn.

Our Lord's Explanation of the Parable.—Read S. Matt. xiii. 36–43. The parable teaches that in this world "the evil are ever mingled with the good." Even amongst the Apostles there was a Judas, and amongst the early Christians, Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.). Sometimes the bad are so plainly bad that they can be put out of the Church ("excommunicated"), but there must still be many whose badness is not known, is sometimes not even suspected; it is only God Who knows the hearts of men; it is He Who will make the separation at the last day. Very terrible words are spoken (verses 41, 42) as to the punishment that shall then fall on the evil men. We have heard before of Angels as the ministers of God's love (announcing the coming of Our Lord, heralding His birth, ministering to Him after His temptation in the wilderness); here (verse 41) they are the ministers of God's wrath, expelling from His Kingdom all that are unworthy of a place there.

A similar lesson is taught in the Parable of the Drawnet (verses 47–50).

The Parables of the Hid Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price.—Read S. Matt. xiii. 44–46. We may read these two Parables together, because they teach the same lesson, though under different circumstances. In the first a man lights upon a sum of money or other valuables buried in the earth. [Men often hid their treasures in this way for safety; they had not banks to put their money in.] Some digger of the ground strikes his spade on the box or chest in which the treasure is hid, and the gold sparkles amongst the dull earth. He tells no one, but throws in the soil, and goes and sells everything he possesses that he may buy the field and get the treasure with it. [It is not said that he acted honestly. What ought he to have done? He ought to have told the man who owned the field what was hidden there, and not have made a profit to himself out of the other's ignorance; but this does not come into the lesson of the Parable.]

In the second Parable there is a trader in pearls [beautiful and precious stones found in the shells of certain fish] who finds one excelling in size and beauty all that he has ever seen; he too "sells all that he has" that he may buy this one pearl.

The Explanation.—In both stories there is something very precious; in one case it is come upon by accident, in another it is found by one who is seeking. This represents the treasures of God's grace, "the good things God has prepared for them that love Him"; to get these a man is wise to part with everything that he possesses.

APPLICATION

What is it that men prize most in the world? With many it is money or other worldly possessions. We read of one who "had great possessions" (S. Mark x. 17–22), whom Our Lord called upon to give them up for His sake. He refused, and we know that he missed something far better. We read too of another who left his profitable trade when the Lord said, "Follow me." Who was that? See S. Matt. ix. 9. So S. Peter and S. Andrew and S. James and S. John forsook their fishing-nets at the call of Christ. There are others who prize above everything the honour of their fellow-men. Read what S. Paul said (Philipp. iii. 8): it was worth while to lose all if he could "gain Christ."

Collect for S. James' Day.

Hymn 108: "When I survey the wondrous Cross."

Lesson XXV. THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND MEN

PREPARATION

We heard in a former Lesson (XIX) of Our Lord sending out His Apostles on what we should call a "Mission"; their work was to preach, to proclaim their Lord's Coming, and at the same time to exercise the Power which He had bestowed upon them of "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." They returned to their Master, bringing reports of the miracles they had wrought in His Name and of the teaching they had given. Such work was very exhausting, tiring to the body, and tiring also to the mind and spirit. Notice Our Lord's sympathy (S. Mark vi. 31): He wished to give His tired ministers a rest, which they could not get amongst the crowds on the western side of the Sea of Galilee; and so with His Apostles He crossed over to a desert place on the eastern side. But, as it is said of Him on another occasion, "He could not be hid." [Show a map of the Sea of Galilee.]

PRESENTATION

Our Lord's Compassion for the Multitude.—Read S. Mark vi. 31–34. "There were many coming and going" (verse 31), and S. John (vi. 4) gives the reason for this: the Passover was at hand, and the pilgrims were thronging the way to Jerusalem. Our Lord had crossed the lake in a boat, desiring to escape notice, but the people, perceiving this, followed Him, going by land round the northern part of the lake, and reaching their destination earlier than those who had gone by the boat. Jesus, seeing this great crowd, was "moved with compassion towards them" (verse 34); they were "as sheep not having a shepherd"; their own proper guides and pastors neglected their duty, and so the people were unshepherded and unfed and uncared for. "He began to teach them many things," supplying that which their own teachers should have given.

The Miraculous Feeding.—Read S. Mark vi. 35–44. The day drew to its close. The people had left their homes in haste, and all day long they had been intent on listening to the Lord's teaching; they had made no provision for a meal, and there was no opportunity of getting food in this "desert place." Notice the disciples' advice (verse 36); Our Lord's answer (verse 37); and their amazement at a direction which seemed to them so impossible to carry out: "two

hundred pennyworth of bread" [the penny much more than our penny, a man's wages for a day (S. Matt. xx. 2)] would not suffice for their needs. There was a lad amongst the crowd who had five little loaves and two small fishes, and S. Andrew called attention to him (S. John vi. 8, 9); but what was this little store for the feeding of five thousand? The Lord takes what they can bring; the multitude is divided out into little groups, some of a hundred each and some of fifty, and from His hands the loaves and fishes, first blessed by Him, are distributed, through the Apostles, to the hungry multitude, and so they were fed. And when all were satisfied, they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that were left—far more than the original store. S. Matthew (xiv. 21) tells us that there were women and children in the crowd who shared in the Lord's bounty.

[There was another occasion on which Our Lord fed a great multitude (see S. Mark viii. 1–9). This time the people had been longer with Our Lord (verse 2); they were four thousand in number; seven loaves formed the provision they had, and seven hampers of broken meat were gathered up.]

APPLICATION

We have said before that Our Lord's miracles were "acted parables," teaching by act instead of by words, and the teaching of this miracle is found in the Discourse which Our Lord gave on the following day in the synagogue at Capernaum (see S. John vi., especially verses 33 and 35): "I am the Bread of Life." The bread given in the wilderness satisfied the hunger of their bodies; Jesus Himself would satisfy the hunger of their souls. This was a foreshadowing of what Our Lord did and said in the Upper Room at Jerusalem on the night before He died (read S. Mark xiv. 22). This spiritual feeding on Christ is perpetuated in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

This miracle, like the turning of water into wine, shows Our Lord's power in Nature; it is the same Lord Who "giveth food unto all flesh" in "the yearly miracle of harvest." The disciples had very little to bring to their Master, but they were required to bring that little. We must do our best, and God will supply what is lacking.

Note that even a "lad" was made useful in carrying out Our Lord's work: "What can *we* do for Jesus' sake?"

For *Collect:* General Thanksgiving.

Hymn 383: "We plough the fields and scatter."

Lesson XXVI. S. PETER'S CONFESSION OF CHRIST

PREPARATION

The time had now come for Our Lord to be acknowledged by His disciples as the Christ, the Messiah, the "One to Come" (S. Matt. xi. 3), Whom the Jews had been expecting as the Saviour. Distinguish between JESUS (meaning Saviour), which was Our Lord's *personal* name, and CHRIST or THE CHRIST (The Anointed One), which was His *official* name. The Jews then, and Jews now, acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth, but they did not, and do not, acknowledge Him as the Christ. Our Lord's Messiahship had been guessed at by S. Andrew (S. John i. 41), and declared by Our Lord to the Woman of Samaria (*ib.* iv. 25, 26). It must now be accepted by the Apostles as a body.

PRESENTATION

The Confession of Jesus as the Christ.—Read S. Matt. xvi. 13–16. The scene of this declaration was Cæsarea Philippi [see Map], on the borders of the Gentile nations. Jesus was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles" as well as "to be the glory of God's people Israel." S. Luke (ix. 18) tells us that Our Lord was praying at the time. It was a great crisis (or turning-point) in His work on earth, and He prepared for it by Prayer, as He did for His Baptism (S. Luke iii. 21) and Transfiguration (*ib.* ix. 20). Note the different persons with whom Our Lord was identified by the people who heard His words and saw His miracles (verse 28). John the Baptist had been put to death by Herod, and the cruel king was one of those who thought that Jesus was John the Baptist "risen from the dead" (S. Matt. xiv. 2). But "*Whom say ye that I am?*" S. Peter answers as the chief and representative of the Apostles. For the present this great truth about Our Lord was not to be made public (S. Mark viii. 30); the time had not yet come for His announcement to the world.

Our Lord's Commendation of S. Peter.—Read S. Matt. xvi. 17–20. *Bar-jona* means *son of Jona; Simon, son of Jona*, was S. Peter's natural name, the name by which he would be known amongst his own people; the name *Peter*, which means *the Rock*, was given him by Our Lord (see S. John i. 42). In Our Lord's words (verse 18) there is a play upon this name: "Thou art called the *rock* man, and on thee as a

rock will I build My Church"; S. Peter represented the Apostles, upon whom or upon whose faith the Church is built (Eph. ii. 20). This is almost the only place in the Gospels where the word *Church* is used. Our Lord did not "build His Church" during His earthly life; He only prepared for it; the building was begun, after His Ascension into heaven, by His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 47).

Our Lord's Prediction of His Sufferings—His Reproof of S. Peter.—Read S. Matt. xvi. 21–23. When Our Lord accepted the words which proclaimed Him to be the Messiah, His disciples no doubt thought of Him as one who would found an earthly kingdom, and deliver them from the power of their Roman masters; but *from that time forth* Jesus began to speak of His sufferings and rejection (verse 21). This was very distasteful to S. Peter; he took His Lord aside, as if he did not wish the others to hear, and dared even to rebuke His Master. This brought on him one of the sternest reproofs that Our Lord ever addressed to any one of His disciples (verse 23). They were the very words which He spoke to the Tempter in the wilderness (S. Mark viii. 33). Though S. Peter spoke out of the warmth of his affection for his Master, he was trying to dissuade Him from treading the path of suffering, which was to be the means of man's salvation. "He *minded* not the things of God, but the things of men" (verse 23, R.V.); he judged of things as men judge, not as God judges. Read verses 24 and 25. For the first time Our Lord speaks of "taking up the Cross"; He did it *literally* when He carried His Cross to Calvary; we must imitate Him by denying ourselves and bearing patiently whatever sufferings may be laid upon us.

APPLICATION

We have read from S. Matthew's Gospel; if we look at the account of the same incident in S. Mark's Gospel (viii. 27–33), what is left out? We know that S. Mark wrote his Gospel under the eye of S. Peter, and no doubt it was the Apostle who told the Evangelist to leave out the words of praise and to put in the words of reproof. How different this is from our way! We like everything to be told that is for our credit, and would gladly suppress all that is to our shame.

Collect for S. Peter's Day.

Hymn 215: "The Church's one Foundation."

Lesson XXVII. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

PREPARATION

When Our Lord Jesus Christ became man we are told "He made Himself of no reputation" (Philipp. ii. 7)—literally "emptied Himself" (R.V.), *i.e.* divested Himself of "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was" (S. John xvii. 5). But once during His earthly life that "glory" broke out, and shone before the eyes of His favoured disciples. The place where He showed His glory was probably Mount Hermon, a snow-clad mountain far away to the north of Palestine, beyond Cæsarea Philippi, the scene of S. Peter's Confession spoken of in the last Lesson. [Show Map.]

PRESENTATION

Our Lord Transfigured.—Read S. Mark ix. 2 and 3. It was a week after S. Peter had confessed Jesus to be the Christ [S. Matthew and S. Mark say "after six days"; S. Luke "about eight days after": the meaning is the same, but S. Luke reckons in the day of S. Peter's confession and also the day of the Transfiguration, while the others leave them out.] Note the same three disciples who were with Our Lord at the raising of Jairus' daughter, and were afterwards His companions in the Garden of Gethsemane. Our Lord took them up the mountain *to pray* (S. Luke). While He was praying a wondrous change took place: He was *transfigured;* His appearance was changed; "the fashion of His countenance was altered" (S. Luke); and His raiment shone (read v. 3). A *fuller*, *i.e.* a laundress; S. Mark (who must have had the story from S. Peter, an eye-witness) says that the whiteness of the Lord's raiment was such as no laundress could have given to it.

Those who appeared to Our Lord.—Read S. Mark ix. 4. Moses who had given the Law to Israel, and Elijah, the representative of the Old Testament Prophets: these appeared and talked with Our Lord. S. Luke (ix. 31) tells us that they shared the glory of the Transfiguration, and also the subject of their conversation with Our Lord—His *decease*, *i.e.* the death which He was to die at Jerusalem.

The Effect on the Apostles.—Read S. Mark ix. 5, 6. S. Luke (ix. 32) tells us that they "were heavy with sleep," and that they roused themselves and beheld the Lord and His companions just as the vision was passing away. S. Peter [impulsive as usual] wished to build three *tabernacles* (or *tents*) on the mountain top, as dwelling-places for

Our Lord and Moses and Elias, that, with them, they might spend all their days in happy association.

The passing of the Vision.—Read S. Mark ix. 7, 8. A cloud such as is common on mountain heights enveloped them, and a voice was heard from the cloud, like that which was heard at Our Lord's Baptism, testifying to His Divine Sonship. And with this the Vision ended, and Jesus only was left with the three Apostles.

What befell the nine Apostles while the Three were with Our Lord on the Mount.—Read S. Mark ix. 14–27. A lunatic, or "epileptic," boy (S. Matt. xvii. 15), dumb and deaf and suffering from convulsions (verses 17, 18, 25), possessed with an evil spirit: the failure of the Nine to deal with his maladies; their Lord and the three chief members of their body were away, and their faith failed (S. Matt. xvii. 19, 20). Notice the father's appeal and Our Lord's answer (verses 22 and 23), and the father's touching profession (verse 24); and then the expulsion of the evil spirit from the poor child whom he had held under his thrall.

APPLICATION

We may think of this wonderful incident of Our Lord's Transfiguration (i) as given to strengthen Him, in His human Nature, for the suffering and death to which He was now looking forward; (ii) as given to strengthen the faith of His Apostles. It must have been a great shock to them to be told of the suffering and death of their Master, when they had all along been thinking of Him as a conquering King. The voice from heaven was God's testimony to Him, and when the dark days came which closed Our Lord's earthly life, His disciples would be all the better able to bear the trial because they had been "eye-witnesses of His Majesty," and had heard the voice from heaven "in the holy mount" (2 Peter i. 16–18).

There is a picture painted by the great artist Raphael which shows on one side the Mountain of Transfiguration, with the Lord and His Apostles and the two heavenly visitors; and on the other side, at the foot of the Mountain, the "lunatic" boy, with the Scribes and the Apostles in controversy. It was a great contrast—Our Lord in His Majesty, with His glorified Body, like that which we may wear at the Resurrection; and on the other side our poor human nature under the power of the evil one: it is Man at his highest and best, and Man in his degradation (read Ps. viii. 4–9).

Collect: "O Almighty Lord and everlasting God . . ." (Collect at end of Communion Service).

Hymn 461: "For ever we would gaze on Thee."

Lesson XXVIII. THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

PREPARATION

Our Lord was recognised by His fellow-countrymen as a Teacher (Lesson XX). They implied this when they addressed Him as "Rabbi" or "Master"; but He was not one of the regular or authorised teachers, like "the Scribes" and such as had been trained in the schools of other Rabbis; from time to time He had to meet the criticism of these Jewish Rabbis; one of these we shall hear of to-day; he is called "a Lawyer," *i.e.* a man learned in the Jewish Law or Holy Scripture.

PRESENTATION

The Lawyer's Question.—Read S. Luke x. 25–29. The question (verse 25) was the most important that could be asked: "What was he to do to put himself right with God and to gain a place in His Kingdom of glory?" When it is said that he *tempted* Our Lord, it is not meant that he wished "to catch Him in His words" as others did (S. Mark xii. 13), but only that he put the old question to see if He had any new light to throw on it. Our Lord turned back the question upon him, and referred him to the Scriptures of which he was a professional teacher: in Deut. vi. 5 and Lev. xix. 18 he would find his question answered. This must have been very disappointing to the Lawyer; he wanted to hear some new thing, and was told just to go back to the Old Scriptures which he had learnt as a child, and taught as a man. If he wanted to get up an argument Our Lord left him no opening. There was just one chance: the Law said, "Thou shalt love thy *neighbour*"; but "Who is my neighbour?" It was to answer that question that Our Lord told him the Parable.

The Good Samaritan.—Read S. Luke x. 30–37. Note (i) the miserable plight of the poor traveller; (ii) the indifference shown by the Priest and Levite; (iii) the active sympathy shown by the Samaritan, one of a race whom the Jews hated and despised, how he

spared neither time nor trouble nor expense in rendering service to a suffering fellow-creature.

Our Lord's Question.—Read S. Luke x. 36 and 37. It was Our Lord's way—it is the way of good teachers, who follow His example—sometimes to answer questions by questions, to make the questioner answer himself. So Our Lord did with the lawyer: though he hated, no doubt, to say any good of a Samaritan, he was bound to confess that the "neighbour" was the man who showed mercy to him that fell among thieves.

APPLICATION

This Parable teaches us: (i) What Our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. The world, mankind, was like that wounded, ill-treated traveller; Satan had set upon him and robbed him of his innocence and of many of the good things which God had given him; the Jewish Church (represented by the Priest and Levite) gave him no help; but *Jesus Christ, the true good Samaritan,* took pity on him, bound up his wounds by His loving treatment, and placed him in "the inn"—the Church—where he could be tended and restored. (ii) *What we must do to others:* "Go and do thou likewise," *i.e.* imitate the Good Samaritan. The lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbour? Whom am I *bound* to help?" Our Lord did not really answer his question, but gave him a nobler one: "Whom *can* I help?" There are many ways in which we can imitate the Good Samaritan: in our homes, in school and out of school, by readiness to help and do acts of service to all who need; in heathen lands, by pitying the ignorance of those who know not God, by praying for their conversion, by helping, in our own little way, to send out to them the Gospel, the good news of God's love. The black man in Africa, the yellow man in China, the savages who feed on human flesh (cannibals), the Esquimaux in the frozen North—these are all our "neighbours," and claim our sympathy and help. [Refer to the work of the King's Messengers and the Gleaners' Union—affording a practical way of showing the reality of our desire to help on Foreign Missions.]

Collect: Third Collect for Good Friday.

Hymn 359: "Saviour, sprinkle many nations."

Lesson XXIX. THE RAISING OF THE DEAD

PREPARATION

We have read of many miracles performed by Our Blessed Lord—His cleansing lepers, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, casting out evil spirits—all these show His power over the bodies of men; other miracles, such as turning water into wine, multiplying the few loaves to feed the great multitude, stilling the storm, &c., show His rule in the world of Nature; but the miracle that seems to us most wonderful is the raising of the dead, bringing back to life those who had departed from it. ["The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death"—1 Cor. xv. 26.] On three recorded occasions Our Lord raised the dead; two of these will be the subject of our Lesson to-day. [Contrast the funeral customs of the East with those of England—the mourners, the short interval between death and burial, the absence of a coffin, the character of the tomb, &c.]

PRESENTATION

The Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain.—Read S. Luke vii. 11–17. Our Lord was coming from Capernaum, where He had healed the paralysed servant of the Roman Centurion. He entered into Nain, a neighbouring town, accompanied by His disciples and a great number of people. What a sad sight met Him! Coming out from the gate of the city—a Funeral. Any funeral calls for solemn and reverent thought: we see the mourners weeping, and should think of their loss. [Boys should take off their caps when a funeral passes in the street or road; and both boys and girls should stop their talk or play and keep reverent silence for a minute or two.] There was a special sadness about this funeral: "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow"; she had lost her husband and now her only son, and so was destitute as well as bereaved; her neighbours were accompanying her as a sign of their sympathy. Notice (verse 13) Our Lord's *sympathy* (feeling for others in their sorrows and distresses). The body of the dead man was not laid in a coffin or put into a hearse, but was laid, swathed in grave-clothes, on a bier. Our Lord's touch arrested the bearers, and His word of Power raised the dead—verse 14. Notice the further mark of His sympathy: "He delivered him to his mother"; it was for her sake, out of compassion for her sorrow, that the miracle was wrought. The people were moved with fear at this exhibition of supernatural power, and at the same time they glorified God, Who had given this proof of His Presence amongst them.

The Raising of Jairus' Daughter.—Read S. Mark v. 21–24 and 35–43. The circumstances of this miracle are very different from those of the preceding one. The father came to beg the Saviour's help on behalf of his little daughter, of twelve years of age, who was lying at the point of death, if not already dead (S. Matt. ix. 18). He was "a ruler of the synagogue," what we should call "the President of the Church Council," and so a person of high standing. Our Lord at once acceded to the father's prayer. As He went He was hindered by the plea of another sufferer, whom He healed. [How the troubled father must have fretted at the delay!] Then the sad message and the Lord's words of consolation and hope (verses 35 and 36).

Three of His disciples were chosen as His companions to witness this act of power (verse 37). Why these three? They are three out of the four whose names appear in the First Class of the Apostles [see Lessons XIX and XXVII], and seem to have been selected for special honour. When they arrived at the house they found it filled with mourners, wailing and lamenting, in Eastern fashion, the death of the little girl (verse 39). Jesus reproved their despair; the death He spoke of as "sleep," and thus provoked the derision of the bystanders. In silence He entered the death chamber, accompanied only by the parents of the child and the favoured Three. Note the word of power which S. Mark gives in the language in which it was spoken, *Talitha-cumi* [S. Peter no doubt had told him], and His word prevailed over the power of death (verse 42). For some good reason the Lord bade them not make known this miracle. It is touching to read also of Our Lord's thoughtfulness in directing that food should be given to the child who had passed through such an experience, and would be left weak and in need of sustenance.

APPLICATION

Read Rev. i. 18. He Who spoke these words was the same Jesus Who raised from the dead the widow's son and the daughter of Jairus. These miracles which He wrought on earth were only forecasts of what He will do hereafter. He said of Himself, "I am the *Resurrection* and the Life" (S. John xi. 25); and in another place: "The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (S. John v. 25).

Collect for Easter Day.

Hymn 399: "When our heads are bowed with woe."

Lesson XXX. THE HOME AT BETHANY. THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

PREPARATION

It was part of the pathos (the sadness) of Our Lord's earthly life that He had no home. See what He says Himself, S. Matt. viii. 20. Nazareth, where He had been brought up, was closed to Him by the hostility of the people. There was one place, however, where He was a welcome guest, in which He spent the nights of the last week of His life on earth, from which He ascended into heaven (S. Luke xxiv); that was Bethany, a village on the southern slope of the Mount of Olives, on the way leading to Jericho. [Map.]

PRESENTATION

The Sisters of Bethany.—Read S. Luke x. 38–42. S. Luke first introduces to us the sisters Martha and Mary; he does not mention where they lived; perhaps at the time when his Gospel was written it would have brought danger to them if he had mentioned it; S. John (xi. 1), writing later, does name it. We learn from S. Mark's Gospel (xiv. 3) that their father, Simon, was a leper, which accounts for his not coming into the narrative. S. Luke indicates the characters of the two sisters by their occupations when they received Christ into their house. Martha was "cumbered about much serving"; she was anxious to provide a proper entertainment for their Guest, but she got fussy and, as we shall see, cross about it. "Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word"; she was so intent on His Divine instruction that she had no thought for the cares of the house. Perhaps we may say that both were right and both were wrong; each was doing honour to Our Lord, but Mary was a little forgetful of her sister, and Martha seems to have been vexed at all the work being left to her. Read the words she addressed to Our Lord (verse 40): it seems almost as if she laid part of the blame on Him ("Dost *Thou* not care . . . ?"). Now read Our Lord's gentle reproof of the busy housewife (verses 41 and 42): the "one thing needful" is the Saviour's approval, which each was seeking though their ways differed.

The Sickness and Death of Lazarus.—Read S. John xi. 1–16. Trouble came upon this family with whom Jesus had condescended to be a guest. Lazarus, the brother, is not mentioned by S. Luke; perhaps

he was younger than the sisters and did not take a prominent place in the household. He fell sick, and the thoughts of the sisters at once turn to their Friend (read verse 5). How strangely Our Lord spoke, and how strangely He acted (verse 6) when the message reached Him! At last, after two days' silence and inaction, He proposed to go into Judæa, dangerous as it was because of the hostility of the Jews. Notice Our Lord's words: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth"; he was still their friend [Death does not sever friendships]; and sleep is an image of death. [We call burying-grounds "Cemeteries," *i.e.* sleeping-places.] Notice also the heroism of S. Thomas (verse 16); we must remember that when we come to the story of his doubt about Our Lord's Resurrection.

The Raising of Lazarus.—Read S. John xi. 17–44. Jairus' daughter was but just dead when Our Lord brought her back to life; the son of the widow of Nain had been dead only a few hours [in Eastern countries burial followed quickly after death]; Lazarus had been dead four days, by which time putrefaction would have set in. Notice the action of Martha and Mary (verse 20), exactly corresponding with the characteristics of the two as found in S. Luke—Martha busy and active, Mary quiet and contemplative (*cp.* verse 32). Notice Jesus *groaning* over the havoc which death had wrought (verse 33), and *weeping* at the loss of His friend (verse 35). Notice also the word of command (verse 43) which broke the fetters of death. The *grave-clothes* of Lazarus were the swathings in which the Jews encased the bodies of their dead, and the *napkin* was the turban bound round the head. [*Cp.* S. John's account of the empty Tomb of Our Lord (xx. 6, 7).]

APPLICATION

We see in this, as in the two miracles we read of last week, the mighty Power of the Son of God (read again verse 25, quoted last week). They are the opening words of the Service for the Burial of the Dead, and are the ground of the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. "Jesus wept" (verse 35) is the shortest verse in the Bible, but it is one of the most precious: it assures us of the sympathy of Our Saviour with those that mourn.

Collect for Easter Eve.

Hymn 193: "Jesu, Lover of my soul."

Lesson XXXI. PARABLES WHICH SET FORTH THE SEEKING LOVE OF GOD

PREPARATION

Our Lesson to-day is on three Parables which are found only in S. Luke's Gospel. These Parables differ in many respects, but they are alike in this, that they all represent men as lost, as having wandered away from their true home, and being brought back by the seeking love of God. It was the Gentiles specially who had gone out of the way and forgotten God; S. Luke was a Gentile, writing a Gospel for Gentiles, and it is specially in his Gospel that we have teaching about the recovery of the lost. You know the joy of finding what is lost—a lost knife or pencil, or a lost domestic pet, like a dog. God teaches us that His joy in finding is something like ours. It was the murmuring of the Pharisees because Our Lord associated with publicans and sinners, men whom *they* thought *lost*, that caused Our Lord to speak these Parables.

PRESENTATION

The Lost Sheep and the Lost Piece of Silver.—Read S. Luke xv. 1–10. In the first of these Parables a sheep has been lost; it has gone away from the flock by its own folly. In the second it is a piece of money that a woman has lost; the fault, if there has been any fault, is in her, and not in the coin. In the first only one sheep is lost out of a hundred; the ninety-nine are in the wilderness, exposed to many dangers, but the owner seems to pass by them, and to think only of the one that is in greater peril. Then there is the joy of recovery, the tenderness with which the shepherd treats that which had been lost, the call to neighbours and friends to share the owner's joy.

In the second one silver piece out of ten is lost; the nine pieces are safe in the purse, but the woman spares no pains to find the lost coin; and when it is found she, like the owner of the sheep, calls together her friends and her neighbours to rejoice with her on the recovery.

Our Lord Himself gives the explanation of these Parables: it is sinners who are figured by the lost sheep and the lost piece of money; it is their repentance—their turning back to better courses—that is figured by the finding of them. In the case of the lost sheep it is God, "the good Shepherd who seeks"; in the Parable of the lost coin we may say that the woman represents the Church, which is

God's agent for saving souls. It is the angels in heaven who rejoice over repentant sinners.

The Prodigal Son.—Read S. Luke xv. 11–32. A Parable which tells in a figure the story of the conversion of a sinner, and of God's acceptance of the penitent. "Prodigal" means "wasteful"; it is the name given to the son who "*wasted* his substance with riotous living." The story divides itself into five little sections: (i) The Prodigal leaving his father and his home (verses 11 and 12); this represents man in his self-will going away from God. (ii) His wasting the goods received from his father in riotous living (verse 13); man spending on sinful pleasures the powers and gifts which God has bestowed upon him. (iii) The want and misery that followed (verses 14–16); "sin brings sorrow." The "pleasures of sin" are "but for a season"; afterwards comes the bitterness of disappointment. (iv) Repentance and Return (verses 17–20): "He came to himself" (verse 17). This is just what we mean by Repentance; it is a change of mind, a coming back to our true self, which brings us back to God. (v) The welcome home (verses 20–24), the father's joy, meeting his son half-way, clothing him with the best robe, making a feast to celebrate his homecoming—these all tell us of the welcome God gives to returning sinners: "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. viii. 12).

APPLICATION

The Parable of the Prodigal Son has been called "the Gospel within the Gospel," *i.e.* it brings to us, in the form of a story, the good news of God's love triumphing over man's sin. It is Our Lord's lesson on the meaning of repentance. Work out the steps in true penitence;—sin begins in self-will, wanting to have our own way rather than seeking to know and follow God's way; doing what we like rather than what we ought [*e.g.* disobedience to parents and teachers; boys running away from home; girls taking up acquaintances that their parents disapprove of, or joining in amusements which are not becoming.] This following of our own self-will surely leads to harm. The only safety and happiness for those who have gone astray is to return to God, making no excuses, but throwing ourselves upon His love. Think of this as often as you hear the sentence read in Church: "I will arise and go to my Father . . ."

Collect for Ash Wednesday.

Hymn 256: "Come unto Me, ye weary."

Lesson XXXII. THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

PREPARATION

In reading the Gospels we often find mention made of *The Pharisees*, and we think of them as a sect or party amongst the Jews who were in most things opposed to Our Lord, and of whom Our Lord said some very severe things. We shall understand many passages better if we try to get a clearer knowledge of what these Pharisees were, and what were their beliefs and practices. The name comes from a word which means *to separate*, because they prided themselves on being a separate class, superior in holiness to others. They were very scrupulous about performing all the outward requirements of religion, and were held in reverence by the people generally; but many of them made their religion a cloak for hiding their dishonesty and fraud (S. Matt. xxiii. 14); and many who were so careful about ceremonial acts and minute observances neglected "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (*ib.*, verse 23). It was their hypocrisy, the unreality of their religious professions, that provoked the anger of Our Lord against them; He said that the lowest and most degraded of the people were more likely to be subjects of His Kingdom than these self-righteous Pharisees.

The Publicans were another class of whom we ought to know something. They were the collectors of taxes which were exacted from the Jewish people by their Roman lords, and so they were very unpopular with their fellow-countrymen, who commonly classed them with "sinners"—"publicans and sinners." No doubt many of them justified the ill-repute in which they were held. The Baptist had to warn them against extortion (S. Luke iii. 13). Yet there were good men amongst them: one, Levi or Matthew, was called by Our Lord from "the receipt of custom" (the place where he collected the taxes), to be one of His disciples (S. Matt. ix. 9); and another, Zacchæus, of Jericho, is very honourably mentioned in S. Luke xix. 1–10.

PRESENTATION

The Pharisee and the Publican.—Read S. Luke xviii. 9–14. Two men, representatives of the two classes of whom we have been speaking, went up into the temple to pray, and we can judge the

character of each by the prayer he offered. The Pharisee *stood*—that was the usual attitude of the Jews at prayer, but the word seems to mean that he *stood apart*, to avoid being contaminated by the touch of anyone like the Publican, whom he would think unclean. Thus he acted in the spirit of his name, which means a *separatist*. His prayer began with "God, I thank Thee," but it was really more of a boast than a prayer; he dwells on his own good deeds; he had kept the moral law, and he proudly contrasts himself with the Publican whom he saw, though "afar off," in the Temple. He had been very particular also in his religious observances, fasting *twice* in the week (when the ordinary practice was to fast but once), and giving tithes (the tenth part, devoted to the service of God) of everything that he possessed, small as well as great [see S. Matt. xxiii. 23, quoted before]. Now look at the Publican—"standing afar off," far away from the proud Pharisee, far away from the Holy Place ["at the bottom of the Church," as we should say], with downcast eyes (a sign of *humility*), beating his breast with his hands (a sign of *penitence*), using only the short, fervent prayer: *God be merciful to me a sinner*. No thought of any merit of his own, but only of his sins; no thought of the Pharisee, or of any other bystander, but only of God. Which of the two, the Pharisee or the Publican, was the better man? We can have no hesitation in answering. Our Lord Himself has told us (verse 14);—the Publican went from his prayer *justified*, *i.e.* approved by God, rather than the Pharisee.

APPLICATION

Notice to whom, for whose benefit, Our Lord spoke this Parable (verse 9). So that it was meant to correct two faults: (i) self-righteousness; (ii) the despising of others. We are all prone to the first of these, to be satisfied with ourselves, to think there is not much wrong with us; but that comes of our not setting up the holy Law of God before us as the standard of our conduct, and the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ as the pattern by which we ought to shape our own life. We compare ourselves with other people, and think we are better, or not much worse, than they are, instead of judging ourselves by God's rule and Christ's example. At the same time we are too prone to despise others, dwelling on their faults rather than on what is good in them.

Collect for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

Hymn 184: "Rock of ages, cleft for me."

Lesson XXXIII. PALM SUNDAY. THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

PREPARATION

Our Lord had been at Bethany [see Lesson XXX] probably since Friday night. Saturday was the Sabbath, which would be kept in holy quietness. How Our Lord, as "perfect Man," would prize this little time of rest amongst His friends before the struggle of the following week! It was probably on the Saturday night, after the Sabbath was past, that the Supper took place "in the house of Simon the leper," where Mary anointed the feet of the Saviour—anointing Him "for His burial" (S. Mark xiv. 3–9).

PRESENTATION

The Departure from Bethany.—Read S. Mark xi. 1–8. On the following day (Sunday) Our Lord prepared to enter the holy City; the prophet *Zechariah* had foretold this (read S. Matt. xxi. 5). First He sent two of His disciples into the neighbouring village, *Bethphage*, with instructions as to how and where they should find an ass with a colt, and bring them for His use. The colt had never before been ridden (verse 2), and so was fitted to bear its royal burden. The owner willingly parted with it—probably he was a disciple of Jesus. And when the colt was brought some of the people spread their clothes on it, out of respect for Him Who was to ride on it.

The Welcome of the Crowds.—Read S. John xii. 12 and 13. It was the week of the Passover, when Jerusalem would be full of visitors come to Jerusalem to keep the Feast, and when pilgrims would be crowding all the roads and neighbouring villages. S. John tells us of a crowd coming out of Jerusalem; the other Evangelists tell us of a crowd that accompanied Our Lord from Bethany. When these two crowds met, those from Jerusalem turned back, preceding Our Lord, while the others followed Him. The people in their eagerness cut down branches from the palm-trees and strewed them in the way [hence "Palm Sunday"] and spread their garments in the way for Jesus to ride over.

Jesus owned as the Messiah.—Read S. Mark xi. 9, 10. Then the

two crowds joined in singing hymns of praise and welcome to the Saviour. They hailed Him as the "Son of David" ["great David's greater Son"], and sang in His honour Psalm cxviii. 25, 26, one of the Jewish Festival Psalms, sung at the Feasts of Passover and Tabernacles. *Hosanna* is the Hebrew word meaning *Save, we pray*, which is the opening word of Psalm cxviii. 25. So they owned Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ [the *Messiah*] in whom the prophecies were fulfilled. The Pharisees were annoyed at this acknowledgment. Note how Our Lord answered them (read S. Luke xix. 39, 40).

Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.—Read S. Luke xix. 41–44. Travellers have traced the way over the Mount of Olives by which Our Lord and the accompanying crowds went from Bethany to Jerusalem; at one point on the road Jerusalem in all its beauty would flash upon their view; there Our Lord *wept*—not merely *shedding silent tears*, as He did at the grave of Lazarus (S. John xi. 35), but *crying aloud*. Sad to see a strong man weeping; *how* sad to see Jesus weeping! The cause—the Jews had had their last opportunity from God, and had failed to use it; in less than forty years this holy, beautiful city would be destroyed.

APPLICATION

The Jews received Our Lord with songs of welcome—but how quickly they changed! On Sunday it was "Hosanna"; on the Friday following "Crucify Him." We condemn their *fickleness*. But *we* sing Psalms and Hymns full of praise to God and love to Jesus Christ, and then some of us go out into the world and say things that grieve the Blessed Saviour and dishonour His holy Name—see S. James iii. 10. *These things ought not so to be.*

The Jews had many opportunities given to them by God—through Moses and the Prophets who had taught them in past times; but they had neglected their teachings, and now they were rejecting Jesus Christ. So if we neglect *our* opportunities—at home, in school, at Church—they will pass away, and we shall miss the blessing meant for us.

Collect for the Sunday before Easter.

Hymn 99: "Ride on! ride on in majesty."

Lesson XXXIV. MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK. THE FRUITLESS FIG-TREE. THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

PREPARATION

Sunday, a Day of Triumph—amidst the acclamations of the people "Jesus wept"; if He had consented to go their way He might have been a popular leader—perhaps a king; but that would have been to win "A Crown without a Cross"—not what Our Lord came to do. As we pass through the week the shadows deepen; we call it "Holy Week" because of the holy events that took place in it. The Germans call it "Still Week" because of the sacred quiet which ought to mark it.

PRESENTATION

The Fruitless Fig-Tree.—Read S. Mark xi. 12–14. On the Sunday Our Lord only paid a brief visit to the Temple, and at the close of the day returned to Bethany. On the following day He went again to Jerusalem—the same way as on Sunday—no crowds now! On the way a tree which gave promise of fruit, though it was too early yet to expect it. Our Lord came and found "nothing but leaves." The punishment denounced: "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever." The punishment fulfilled: read verses 20 and 21. The only Miracle wrought by Our Lord which was not a work of mercy; a Miracle of Judgment, meant to teach a lesson—not on a man [as on Ananias when he fell dead (Acts v).] but on a tree [which had no feeling, no soul]. The miracle teaches: (i) the power of Faith (verses 22 and 23); (ii) the penalty of profession without practice—leaves without fruit. The Jews made a great show of religion but did not live religious lives; as the events of the week would show, their religion was hard and unloving; and so they "withered away," were destroyed as a nation, like the barren fig-tree.

The Cleansing of the Temple.—Read S. Mark xi. 15–19. The courts surrounding the Temple, meant for the service of God, were desecrated by trading—the people making a common thoroughfare of the sacred place; merchants selling doves for sacrifice; others

changing the money which the people brought with them from heathen lands for Jewish money, which alone could be offered to God in the Treasury. No doubt these traders made a big profit on these transactions (see the last words of verse 17); very likely the Priests shared in the ill-gotten gains (verse 18). Once before (two years ago) Our Lord had found the same thing going on [see Lesson XI]; now, as then, He put a stop to it by His own majestic authority (verses 15 and 16). The words, *My house shall be called a house of prayer*, were quoted by Our Lord from Isa. lvi. 7; the words that follow, *Ye have made it a den of thieves*, from Jer. vii. 11; so low had religion fallen amongst the people that Our Lord compares their Temple to one of those caves [like *smugglers' caves* in later times], where bandits and robbers wrangled over the booty they had dishonestly gotten.

The Blind and the Lame in the Temple.—Read S. Matt. xxi. 14–17. S. Matthew alone tells us of these afflicted people coming to Our Lord in the Temple, and of the *Hosannas* of the children which they had learnt the day before. So Jesus was "the children's Saviour."

APPLICATION

The Penalty on the Barren Fig-Tree teaches us the sin and danger of making a show of religion without anything corresponding to it in our lives. Going to Church; kneeling down to say our Prayers in Church or at home; singing Hymns—these are "nothing but leaves," if we have not real religious feeling behind them, and if we do not try "to live more nearly as we pray."

Our Lord's Reverence for His Father's House teaches us the duty of reverence for our Churches and all that belongs to them; when we are in God's House we should put away all thoughts of things outside, all play and whispering, and give ourselves wholly to the service of God. [S. Paul's Cathedral was at one time almost as irreverently used as the Jewish Temple. You know how reverently it is kept now.]

Collect for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Hymn 98: "All glory, laud and honour."

Lesson XXXV. TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK. THE DAY OF QUESTIONS

PREPARATION

We have a fuller account of Our Lord's sayings on this day than on any other day of His earthly life. It is sometimes called "the Day of Questions," because of the number of questions asked on that day—beginning with the question which the Chief Priests and Scribes asked of Our Lord in the Temple: "By what authority doest Thou these things, and who gave Thee this authority to do these things?" (S. Matt. xxi. 23)—the "things" referred to being specially the Cleansing of the Temple on the preceding day; and ending with Our Lord's question: "What think ye of Christ?" (S. Matt. xxii. 42). We can reckon up six questions asked and answered that day. [These might be searched for by the class silently.] Two of these we will take as the subject of our Lesson.

PRESENTATION

I. *The Question of the Sadducees on the Resurrection.* Read S. Matt. xxii. 23–30. The Sadducees were the party opposed on most points to the Pharisees; they were men of the world, not thinking much of the requirements of the Jewish Law; they did not believe in the Resurrection of the dead, nor did they believe in angels or spirits (Acts xxiii. 8). They came to S. John's Baptism (S. Matt. iii. 7), probably out of curiosity, but for the most part they stood aloof from Our Lord and His teaching; they would regard Him and His words as beneath their notice. At last they came to Him with a scoffing question, by which they hoped to bring contempt both upon Our Lord and upon their enemies the Pharisees (who did believe in the Resurrection and in the spiritual world); they invented the case of a woman married to seven husbands in succession, and asked scoffingly to which of these seven she would belong in the Resurrection (verses 25–28). It was a poor jest and sneer of theirs. Our Lord convicts them of ignorance—these proud, self-satisfied men: (i) they did not "know the Scriptures," which God had given for their learning, from which they might have learned the truth of the Resurrection; (ii) they did not know "the power of God"; they measured Him by the measure of their own feeble minds, and could not think of a life higher than the life here.

The Resurrection proved from Holy Scripture.—Read S. Matt. xxii. 31–33. God in the Old Testament (Exod. iii. 6) proclaimed Himself

to be the God of the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; these had all passed away before God made this declaration to Moses, but He was *their God* still, and they must still be living to Him.

II. *The Great Commandment in the Law.*—Read S. Matt. xxii. 34–40). The Pharisees, and the Scribes [see Lesson XXI], who were of their party, would be pleased at the overthrow of the Sadducees—for once they were on Our Lord's side. One of them, a "lawyer" (S. Matthew calls him), *i.e.* one learned in the Jewish Law, tried Him with a hard question: Which of all the Commandments was to be reckoned greatest? Our Lord does not give any novel answer to this—such as perhaps the lawyer expected; He refers him to his own sacred books, of which he was a professional interpreter; there, in Deut. vi. 4, 5, and in Lev. xix. 18, he would find the two Great Commandments set out: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* "There is none other Commandment," Our Lord said (S. Mark xii. 31), "greater than these."

S. Mark (xii. 32–34) tells us how the Scribe accepted this teaching: he said that the keeping of these Commandments was of more importance than all the sacrifices of the Jewish religion; he had got to the root of the matter, that the all-important thing is *what we are*, not *what we do;* and Our Lord passed on him the verdict: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God" (verse 34).

APPLICATION

We may learn something from this Lesson about *asking Questions.* We have read of two, the Sadducees' very foolish question, asked to show off their own superiority, and the Lawyer's sensible question (though it was one that he really ought to have been able to answer himself). Notice how differently Our Lord dealt with the two questioners, silencing the one and encouraging the other. Boys and girls often ask questions of their teachers; some of these delight the teacher's heart and give him pleasure to answer, because they show that the scholar has been thinking and wants further information; some are asked just to waste time, or to give the questioner the pleasure of hearing his own voice, or of showing off some bit of knowledge which he has, and such questions the teacher will suppress. One who would ask a good question must be first a humble and diligent learner; the Sadducee asked a foolish question because he did not "know the Scriptures," the Lawyer a wise one because he did.

Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent.

Hymn 210: "Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost."

Lesson XXXVI. TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK. THE DAY OF DISCOURSES

PREPARATION

We heard last week that this was called "The Day of Questions"; it is also called "The Day of Discourses," because of the Parables and other Discourses spoken by Our Lord on this day. They are recorded in S. Matt. xxi. to xxv. Some of them relate to the Judgment coming upon the perverse people who had refused their Saviour; this was to be carried out in the destruction of their Temple and City by the Romans some forty years later; and they relate also to the greater Judgment which shall overtake men at the end of the world. One of these Parables will be our Lesson to-day.

PRESENTATION

The Marriage of the King's Son: the Invitation.—Read S. Matt. xxii. 1–6. "The Kingdom of Heaven"—*i.e.* God's way or method of dealing with His people—here described under the figure of a Marriage Feast made by a King for His Son; it is easy to see that the King is God, and the Son Jesus Christ, Whose Bride is the Church; the Feast represents all the good things which God has provided for His people and offers freely to all. What an invitation! To share in a Feast, on such a joyful occasion, offered by a King! Yet *they would not come.* The invitation repeated, with details of the provision made for their entertainment (verse 4). This also refused—treated with indifference and disdain; those who were bidden as guests went some to their farms, some to their trade, and others ill-treated or murdered the servants who brought the invitation. This represents God's call to His people age after age, and the indifference and scorn with which His call had been received. Read Jer. xxv. 4, and Acts vii. 52.

The Penalty for the Invitation neglected.—Read verse 7. A King cannot be scorned or outraged with impunity. Vengeance comes upon those who have slighted His offer, and done violence to His servants. This was fulfilled when, forty years after, the Romans came and destroyed the city of Jerusalem and burnt up the Temple.

Others invited to be Guests.—Read verses 8–10. This foretold the admission of the Gentiles—people of other nations—to the privileges which the Jews had forfeited by their neglect (read S. Matt. viii. 11, 12). Our Lord's command to His disciples was: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel *to every creature*" (S. Mark xvi. 15).

The Wedding Garment.—Read S. Matt. xxii. 11–14. This is a sequel to the Parable we have read before, and is also a Parable in

itself. Amongst those who listened to Our Lord's teaching would be some Jews and some Gentiles. The Jews would, no doubt, be disturbed and angered by the Parable which plainly told of their rejection. The Gentiles, on the other hand, would be pleased with the words which implied their inclusion in "the Kingdom of Heaven"; they might have thought that all was right with them, and that they were quite sure of the inheritance which the Jews had forfeited. Our Lord gave a lesson to them in this later Parable. "The wedding was furnished with guests"—they were all there, "both bad and good"; in an eastern feast fitting robes were provided by the host for his guests, but one of these guests, through negligence or indifference, had failed to provide himself with the suitable attire—he "had not on a wedding garment"; he had no excuse to offer; he was expelled from the Feast and condemned to punishment. This teaches us that, though God's invitation is to every creature ("many called"), there must be a fitness in those who are accepted guests ("few chosen")—verse 14.

APPLICATION

These two Parables teach us specially two lessons; (i) *The Peril of Indifference.*—God is calling us all through our lives; in Baptism, we are called to be God's children; in Confirmation, we are offered strength to do our duty; in Holy Communion, we may partake of Christ and be made One with Him. How sad if God, the Giver of the Feast, shall say of any of us: "They which were bidden were not worthy!" (ii) *The Peril of Presumption.*—If you are preparing for Holy Communion you will use the words of the Hymn:

> "I am not worthy, Holy Lord,
> That Thou should'st come to me,"

but you should not be content and satisfied with your unworthiness; you must be continually trying to become a little more worthy or a little less unworthy. The Giver of the Feast knew that His invited guests were, many of them, "unworthy," but the wedding garments were there to cover over their mean attire, and make them fit to share in the Feast; so in one of the Addresses in the Service of Holy Communion we are told that we should "come holy and clean to the heavenly Feast, in the *marriage garment* required by God in holy Scripture."

Collect for the Fifth Sunday after Easter.

Hymn 187: "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Lesson XXXVII. WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY IN HOLY WEEK. THE BETRAYAL, THE PREPARATION, AND THE MAUNDY

PREPARATION

Refer again to the long and wearying day (Tuesday in Holy Week). The following day our Lord spent in retirement at Bethany. "Perfect Man," as well as "Perfect God," He needed rest to prepare Himself for the trials of the days that came after. Note that body and spirit act and react one upon another; it is difficult for us to fix our thoughts upon God when our bodies are wearied by toil. Our Lord did not refuse the few hours of quiet with His friends before meeting His suffering. While He was resting His enemies were plotting.

PRESENTATION

The Betrayal.—Read S. Mark xiv. 1, 2; 10, 11. [Note that the verses which come between 3 to 9 are the narrative of the Anointing which happened some days before (see Lesson XXXIII); S. Mark relates this out of its proper order.] *The Passover*—the third of our Lord's Ministry [which must therefore have lasted for some time between two and three years.] Crafty designs of *the chief priests and scribes*—the leading ministers of the Jews' religion—their difficulty; fear of raising a tumult of the people, who had shown such enthusiasm for Christ on the Sunday.

The Traitor.—Unexpectedly they found their tool in one of Our Lord's own Apostles—*Judas* of Kerioth (a place in Judæa), "one of the Twelve"—all the Evangelists note this, as if shocked at the treachery of one of their own number. He agreed to betray his Master for *thirty pieces of silver*, which would be about £3, 13*s.* of our money—the price of a slave. What led him to do such a base act? Read S. John xii. 4–6. Covetousness led him to dishonesty, and dishonesty to murder. Perhaps he wished to force Our Lord to assert Himself as King of the Jews, and so win royal state and wealth in which he would share.

The Preparation for the Passover.—Read S. Mark xiv. 12–16. On the Thursday Our Lord sent two disciples from Bethany to Jerusalem to make preparation for the keeping of the Passover; the lamb had

been already purchased, and they only needed a guest-chamber in which to make the necessary preparations; this was provided by some unknown person—possibly S. Mark himself—who was a disciple of Christ. Then, in the evening Our Lord came with His disciples to keep with them the Passover Feast.

The Jealousies of the Disciples.—Read S. Luke xxii. 24–30. At such a time, when the Lord's death was at hand, there was a strife amongst His disciples "which of them should be accounted the greatest." Our Lord gives them an example to make them ashamed of their rivalry: "I am among you as he that serveth"—"He took upon Him the form of a servant" (Philipp. ii. 7).

The Washing of the Disciples' Feet.—Read S. John xiii. 2–20. S. John tells us how Our Lord taught in act what S. Luke tells us He taught in words: to wash the feet of guests was the duty of a servant, or slave. Our Lord explained why He did this menial act: "I have given you an example" (read again verses 14 and 15). This Day is called *Maundy* [or Commandment] Thursday in allusion to Our Lord's words: "A new COMMANDMENT I give unto you" (S. John xiii. 34). On this day the Bishop of Rome and some Christian kings follow Our Lord's example by washing the feet of poor beggars, or other persons of humble station; this they do as an act of humility.

APPLICATION

The malice of Our Lord's enemies: how strange, when we remember that He had been all His life "going about doing good!" The Jews had blinded their hearts so that they could not see the good He did—*From blindness of heart, good Lord, deliver us.* Judas was led on from one sin to another, till at last he committed the crime which we think was the basest ever committed by man—the betrayal of his Lord and Master—so let us beware of the first steps in wrongdoing: we never know into what crimes they may lead us.

Our Lord left to us, as well as to His disciples, a lesson of humility, when He washed His disciples' feet. Our true greatness lies in serving others.

Collect for the First Sunday after Easter.

Hymn 194: "Jesu, meek and gentle."

Lesson XXXVIII. THE POINTING OUT OF THE TRAITOR. INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

PREPARATION

After Our Lord had shown His great humility in washing His disciples' feet He took His place again at the head of the table. A great sorrow at His heart—the faithlessness of a friend, one of those whose feet He had washed, one whom He had chosen to be with Him all through His earthly life. This black traitor must have one more warning.

PRESENTATION

The Warning.—Read S. Mark xiv. 18–21. One of them a Traitor! No wonder they were sorrowful. Each one asked, "Is it I?"—all, *with one exception*, asked in the consciousness of innocence. S. John, at S. Peter's bidding, asked his Lord, "Who is it?" and Our Lord gave him secretly a sign by which the Traitor could be known (S. John xiii. 23–26). At last the Traitor himself asked, "Master, is it I?" and the answer was given, perhaps in a whisper, "Thou hast said," *i.e.* "It *is* you" (S. Matt. xxvi. 25). Then the Traitor went out into the night; "the night" was lit up by the Passover moon, which would be at the full, but the soul of Judas was darkened with a thicker night, the blackness of his treachery.

Then Our Lord spoke to His disciples of His going away, and gave them His new Commandment of Love. This drew from S. Peter a fervid expression of loyalty to His Master, followed by a solemn warning from Our Lord (read S. John xiii. 31–38).

Institution of the Holy Eucharist.—Read S. Mark xiv. 22–25. Picture the scene [Leonardo de Vinci's well-known picture of the Last Supper will serve as an illustration—though the details may not be true to life]. In the Passover Feast the chief feature was the lamb which had been sacrificed the day before, and was now eaten by those for whom it had been prepared. Unleavened bread and cups of wine were accompaniments of the sacrificial Feast. On this night nothing

is said of the lamb, because "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (S. John i. 29) was there; the ONE to whom the Passover lamb pointed. But the bread and wine were taken by Our Lord, and set apart for a very special purpose; of the Bread He said, THIS IS MY BODY; of the wine in the cup, THIS IS MY BLOOD. How puzzled they must have been! Once before the Jews had asked the question, "How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?" (S. John vi. 52). But we know that God made known to His disciples the meaning of these words. Our Lord said, THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. That which He appointed then was to be *His Memorial*, the means by which His faithful people were to keep Him in mind, and "show His death" till He should come again (1 Cor. xi. 26). So the Catechism tells us that this holy Sacrament was ordained "for the continual *remembrance* of the sacrifice of the death of Christ."

APPLICATION

We are sure that these last words of Our Lord would not be forgotten. Only a few weeks after this, when Jesus had died, and was buried, and had risen again, and was ascended into heaven—we find His people, now a great number, gathered together for *the breaking of bread* (see Acts ii. 42). This was the "Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," which Our Lord appointed for His memorial on the night before He suffered. Some of an age now to think of coming to this holy Sacrament if they have not come to it already. Recall Our Lord going to the Passover Feast at Jerusalem when He was twelve years old.

There was one who *might* have been at that Feast which Jesus made, but was not—the traitor Judas. He was there at the Passover Supper, but "went out" into the night before the new Feast was kept. How we scorn a *Traitor!* But we have been all sworn in as Christ's soldiers; if we do not obey His commands, we range ourselves with Judas rather than with the faithful Apostles.

Collect for the Third Sunday after Easter.

Hymn 311, Part I: "The Heavenly Word proceeding forth."

Lesson XXXIX. CHRIST PREPARES HIS DISCIPLES FOR HIS GOING AWAY, AND PROMISES ANOTHER COMFORTER

PREPARATION

Picture the scene in the Upper Room—Our Lord and the Eleven. Think of all that had happened since they gathered there that evening after six o'clock—the Washing of Feet, the Passover Meal, the Traitor indicated and self-expelled from their company, words of their Master speaking of His going away (S. John xiii. 33–35)—words which they did not understand. *He* knew, if they did not, that in a few hours He would be nailed to the Cross, and that before another evening came He would have died. "Last words" of those we love never forgotten. We are going to read some of the "last words" of Our Saviour Christ.

PRESENTATION

Why Jesus must go away.—Read S. John xiv. 1–14. The disciples *troubled* (S. John xvi. 5, 6). No wonder! Yet, in ways which they could not yet understand, this separation was good for them (*ib.*, verse 7): partly, that they might learn to *stand alone* [as we have to do, when we leave school and home]. Another reason (read verse 2): the *many mansions* (or *homes*) in Heaven; Jesus going to get one of these ready for those whom He loved and who loved Him (verse 3). Separation brings sorrow; meeting again is joy (read xvi. 22).

Perplexity of Disciples.—S. Thomas' question (verse 5). [We have heard of S. Thomas before, Lesson XXX, and shall hear of him again.] He was one of an inquiring mind; he did not take things for granted, but wanted them cleared up. [A good thing to ask questions if we do it reverently]. Our Lord's answer (verses 6 and 7)—refer to Hymn 199. S. Philip's request (verse 8), *Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us; to see God* would satisfy all their questionings and remove all their doubts. Then Our Lord taught him the wonderful lesson, He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. Jesus, Who had been their companion these many years, Whom they had walked and talked

with, was GOD, BY WHOM ALL THINGS WERE MADE. *Cp.* the Angel's message to S. Joseph: *They shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us* (S. Matt. i. 23).

The Promise of another Comforter.—Read S. John xiv. 15–31. He was going "to prepare a place for them," where one day they should join Him; but they had their lives to live and their work to do—many of them, for many years after this. How could they live and work without Him? Read together verse 16 and verse 18. "Another Comforter," *cp.* the verse in the *Te Deum*, which speaks of *the Holy Ghost, the Comforter*—that tells us Who it was that Our Lord promised to send—the HOLY GHOST or HOLY SPIRIT [*cp.* words in Creed]. So Our Lord would still be with His people—the Same, but in a different way—before *visibly*, then *invisibly;* before, *in one place*, then *in all places*. [*Comforter* means one whom we may call in to help us—to give comfort in sorrow, guidance in difficulty, protection in danger.] All this Jesus was to His disciples, all this He is by His Holy Spirit to us. If we have understood this we shall be able to answer ourselves the question asked by Judas (not Iscariot), (verse 22). Jesus *manifests Himself to us*, *i.e.* makes Himself known to us—coming, by His Holy Spirit, to make His abode with us—in Baptism, at Confirmation, in Holy Communion.

APPLICATION

Our Lord still with us as really as He was with the Eleven who ate the Last Supper with Him in the Upper Room. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (S. Matt. xviii. 20).

The Holy Ghost Our Lord's parting gift to His people:—

> "Our Blest Redeemer, ere He breathed
> His tender last farewell,
> A Guide, a Comforter, bequeath'd
> With us to dwell."

Collect for SS. Philip and James's Day.

Hymn 199: "Thou art the Way."

Lesson XL. THE SIMILITUDE OF THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

PREPARATION

All that Our Lord had to do and say in the Supper Room was now over. He and His disciples sang a Hymn—the concluding part of the Passover Psalms cxv.–cxviii.—and then set out on their journey to the Mount of Olives. On the Porch of the Temple, which perhaps they passed on their way, was a massive golden Vine; we can picture this standing out in the moonlight. Perhaps it gave occasion to Our Lord to speak the "Parable" of the Vine and the Branches. We know how at other times he turned to spiritual profit some object or occurrence that was presented before the eyes of those to whom He spoke (*cp.* the Parable of the Sower, Lesson XXIII), and He seems to have done the same now.

PRESENTATION

A Parable from Nature.—Read S. John xv. 1. We have all looked at trees (oaks, elms, beeches, &c.), perhaps not so often at Vines, because these in our country do not usually grow except in glass-houses. It is good for us to study Nature; God Who made us made also the trees and all things in the world, and they teach us lessons about God. Our Lord said, "Consider the lilies."

"All things bright and beautiful
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful
The Lord God made them all."

Here Our Lord takes a tree and makes it a figure or a similitude of spiritual and heavenly truths. He is the Tree, "the *true* Vine," of which the vine on the Temple Porch was but a symbol; His people are branches in the Vine; God is the husbandman Who planted and tends the Vine.

The Teaching of the Trees.—Read S. John xv. 2–10. (i) The branch only lives and bears fruit as long as it remains in the vine (verse 4). If it is broken off by the wind, or cut away by a knife, it dies. So, unless we are *in touch* with Our Lord, we are spiritually dead; we

bear no fruit. (ii) Unfruitful branches are cut away (verse 2). So those who bring forth no fruit, who do nothing for God's glory or men's good, are not reckoned amongst Christ's true people. (iii) Fruitful branches are *pruned* (verse 2), *i.e.* the runners and shoots are cut back, because these serve no good purpose in the production of fruit, and would only take the nourishment that should go to better uses. So Christ's people are " pruned " by sorrows and losses and trials that they may get rid of *self*, which only hinders them in doing God's work.

APPLICATION

A great deal of Our Lord's teaching could hardly have been understood by those to whom it was first given [*cp.* S. John xiii. 7, S. Matt. xvi. 6–12, &c.]. It was explained by what He did and said later. So " The Vine and the Branches " had its meaning shown by the founding of Christ's Church, after our Lord had ascended into heaven, and by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism which He appointed to be the means of admission into His Church [read Acts ii. 41, 47]. In Holy Baptism we are made " members of Christ," *i.e.* branches of " the true Vine," which is Christ Himself. But is this enough ? We must " abide in the Vine." What this means is taught in the same chapter of the Acts, verse 42 ; there are four things which we must do in order to " abide in the Vine."

(*a*) We must " continue in the Apostles' doctrine," *i.e.* we must " believe all the articles of the Christian Faith," those truths which the Apostles taught, as they had been taught by God.

(*b*) " . . . in the Apostles' fellowship," *i.e.* in Christ's Church, which was " built upon the foundation of the Apostles " (Eph. ii. 20).

(*c*) " . . . in the breaking of the bread," *i.e.* in receiving Holy Communion (see Lesson XXXVIII).

(*d*) " . . . in the Prayers," *i.e.* joining in public worship (see Heb. x. 25). So our lives shall be " filled with the fruits of righteousness " (Philipp. i. 11), good works which we could never do by ourselves, but can only do because we are joined to Christ.

Collect for the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.

Hymn 573 : " All things bright and beautiful."

Lesson XLI. GETHSEMANE. THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

PREPARATION

Review the incidents of the long night (Thursday) before Our Lord suffered. How much was crowded into these few hours—the Washing of the Disciples' Feet; the Institution of the Holy Sacrament; Teachings and Warnings. These were for His disciples and others. But now He sets Himself to prepare for what was coming on the following day—True Man, as well as True God—He had to face Death, and must prepare for it.

PRESENTATION

Gethsemane.—Read S. John xviii. 1, 2. A garden, or orchard, on the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem, filled with olive-trees bearing the berries from which "olive-oil" is extracted; it was named *Gethsemane*—which means *the oil-press.* This was a favourite resort of Our Lord (S. John xviii. 2); He crossed the brook Cedron, and passed out of sight of men and human habitations, to commune, in the silence of night-time, with His Father in heaven.

The Agony.—Read S. Mark xiv. 33–42. Our Lord came to the garden with the whole body of His disciples (now eleven); presently these were left, with the exception of the favoured Three—Peter and James and John. [Recall previous instances when these were the chosen companions of Our Lord: the Transfiguration, the Raising of Jairus' daughter.] Note the deep sorrow and dejection of Our Lord, and His longing for the sympathy of His specially favoured disciples (verses 33 and 34); just as we long for the presence of those we love when sorrow and pain come upon us. He goes further into the garden, perhaps out of the moonlight into the shade, to be *alone with God.* Read the words of His Prayer in verse 36. [*Abba*, the word Our Lord used, means *Father.* S. Peter perhaps heard it, and never forgot it; he, we know, guided S. Mark in the writing of his Gospel.] *The sleeping disciples* (verses 37 and 38), "sleeping for sorrow," S. Luke says. Do we blame them for not watching with their Master, as He had asked them to do? Remember what a night of painful excitement they had passed through. Yet the Lord was pained that

S. Peter especially (verse 37), who had been so loud in his professions, had failed in this hour of trial.

The thrice-repeated Prayer.—That "the cup" of suffering might pass from Him—the natural shrinking from pain. Note at the same time the perfect submission to the Will of God—"not what I will, but what Thou wilt": "Thy will be done." S. Luke (xxii. 44) tells us how intense was the agony of Our Blessed Lord; "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"; and he tells us too of the Angel of the Passion strengthening Him in this struggle (verse 43).

The Lost Opportunity.—S. Mark xiv. 41, 42. Three times the Lord had gone away to pray; three times He had returned, and was disappointed of the sympathy which he craved for. "Sleep on now and take your rest"—it was too late now for them to give Him the help He needed. They had missed the opportunity of giving comfort to their Master in the hour of trial, and they would never cease to regret it.

APPLICATION

"By Thine agony and bloody sweat,
Good Lord, deliver us."

So we pray in the Litany, and whenever we say this prayer we should think of the scene in Gethsemane, of which we have read. "Look and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow." It was another decisive Trial of our Lord's constancy; the first was the Temptation in the Wilderness; *then* Satan tried to *allure* Him by the offer of things that would give pleasure; *here* he tries to *daunt* Him by the prospect of suffering and death. Our Lord won the victory on both occasions—a victory *for us*—that we might not yield to temptation to sinful pleasures, that we might not distrust God even in bitter pains. "Thy will be done" was the motto of Our Lord's life (S. John iv. 34), and He has taught us to use the same Prayer.

Collect for the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

Hymn 106: "My God, I love Thee."

Lesson XLII. THE BETRAYAL. JUDAS

PREPARATION

We heard in Lesson XXXVII that Judas, "one of the Twelve," made a compact with Our Lord's enemies to deliver Him up to them; this was on the Wednesday, and we are told "he sought how he might conveniently betray Him" (S. Mark xiv. 11). The opportunity came when Our Lord was in the Garden of Gethsemane, with only His disciples with Him. "Judas knew the place" (S. John xviii. 2); it was the place to which he had often come with his Master to pray; now he comes with the purpose of delivering up that same Master to those who were bent on His destruction.

PRESENTATION

Judas and his Band.—Read S. Mark xiv. 43. Picture the scene—the solemn quiet of the Garden; the moon shining through the olive-trees; the Saviour weighed down by sorrow; His disciples conscience-stricken because they had failed their Master in His hour of need; the silence broken in upon by a disorderly crowd, amongst whom were a company of Roman soldiers with their officer, and some of the officers of the Jews (S. John xviii. 3); at the head of these, acting as their guide, was the Traitor Judas. Note how majestically Our Lord receives His foes (read S. John xviii. 4–9), though He was alone and unarmed. The very sight of Him struck terror into this rough crowd—*They went backward and fell to the ground.*

The Betrayal with a Kiss.—Read S. Mark xiv. 44, 45. Our Lord had made it clear that He was the One they sought; but, either before or after this, Judas had given a sign, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He"; so he addressed Him once more by the old name of "Master" (*Rabbi*), and saluted Him, as one would salute his friend, with a kiss. Think of the baseness of this! A "Judas kiss" has become a byword to express the deepest treachery disguised under the appearance of affection.

The Impetuous Defender.—Read S. Mark xiv. 47. Who was this? S. John tells us (xviii. 10) that it was S. Peter who thus stood up to

defend his Master [so like him !], and it tells us too the name of the servant (Malchus). S. John's Gospel was written many years after, and perhaps it was safe then to tell these details, which it would not have been safe to tell when the earlier Gospels were written. S. Luke tells us (xxii. 51) how the servant was healed by the touch of Jesus. [Note the *Physician* telling the story of a cure.]

Our Lord's Appeal to the Crowd.—Read S. Mark xiv. 48, 49. Our Lord reminds His captors of His teaching in the Temple; *then* they did not dare to touch Him for fear of the people, who listened to His teaching and would have been prepared to defend Him (S. Luke xxii. 2); but *now* they had Him at their mercy: "this" (He said) "is your hour, and the power of darkness."

The Desertion by His Disciples. The Faithful Follower.—Read S. Mark xiv. 50–52. Our Lord had many sorrows to bear—the treachery of Judas, now the desertion of the disciples whom He had loved and trusted. There was one, however, prepared to follow Him to the end: "a certain young man," who had come out into the night, thinly clad, and who would have kept by the Master if the captors had not taken measures to arrest him. Holy Scripture does not give the name of this young man, but it is generally thought to have been S. Mark himself, the writer of the Gospel which alone tells the incident; it was not the manner of the sacred writers to say more than was necessary about themselves, and so S. Mark may have concealed his own name while telling the story of one "faithful among the faithless found."

APPLICATION

We all condemn Judas for his treachery. Are we quite sure that we never betray our Master by siding with His enemies—evil men and evil spirits that are opposed to Him? And may we not do this while we say prayers and sing hymns which profess affection for Him as much as did the kiss of Judas (*e.g.* "Jesu, the very thought of Thee, With sweetness fills the breast").

Collect: First Collect for Good Friday.

Hymn 110: "Go to dark Gethsemane."

Lesson XLIII. OUR LORD'S TRIAL BEFORE THE JEWISH COUNCIL. HIS DENIAL BY S. PETER. THE REMORSE OF JUDAS

PREPARATION

We heard in the last Lesson how Jesus was "betrayed and given up into the hands of wicked men." What would be their next step? In order to carry out their evil purpose, they had first to get Him condemned by the Jewish Authority, and then to get this condemnation confirmed by the Roman Magistrate. [The relation of the Jewish Rulers to the Roman Government will be found described in D. Smith's *The Days of His Flesh*, chaps. xlvii. and xlviii.]

PRESENTATION

The Trial.—Read S. Mark xiv. 53–65. Note (a) *Our Lord's Judges.*—First *the High Priest*, the Head of the Jewish Church (the successor of Aaron). There seem to have been at this time two claimants to the office, Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas (S. John xviii. 12–14). With him were the *Chief Priests*, the men of rank and eminence amongst the Priests; and the *Elders* and *Scribes*, who were men highly thought of in the Jewish Church. These were assembled in the High Priest's house or palace, and before them, early in the morning, Our Lord was brought for the first inquiry. Presently they were joined by the Council, the Seventy who formed the Supreme Court. (b) *The Charge brought against Him.*—It was speaking against the Temple (verse 58), which they would regard as Blasphemy; but this charge was brought up by false witnesses, got together for the purpose by Our Lord's enemies. He had said *something like this* (see S. John ii. 19), but He was then speaking in quite a different connection (*ib.*, verse 21), and the witnesses twisted the meaning of His words to suit their purpose;—

> "A lie which is half a truth
> Is ever the hardest lie to meet."

(c) *The Silence and Speech of Our Lord.*—He did not deign to answer this trumped-up charge. But later the High Priest *adjured Him* [*i.e.* put Him on oath] to tell if He was the Christ—the Messiah whom the Jews were expecting (S. Matt. xxvi. 63). What was His

answer? Read S. Mark xiv. 62. One day their positions would be reversed: those who now sat to judge Him should then stand before Him as Judge. (d) *The Sentence.*—This they took to be Blasphemy [*i.e.* irreverent, profane language. It would have been if Jesus had been any other than He declared Himself to be, the Son of God], and so they "condemned Him to be guilty of death." Verse 65 tells of the insults heaped upon the innocent Victim.

S. Peter's Denial of his Master.—Read S. Mark xiv. 66–72. Meanwhile there was another tragic incident being enacted in the Palace of the High Priest, where the Trial of Our Lord was taking place. Peter had been very brave when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane (S. John xviii. 10), but, like the rest of the Apostles, he afterwards "forsook Him and fled" (S. Matt. xxvi. 56). He came back, however, and followed, "afar off," the crowd which led Jesus into the Palace of the High Priest. There his Faith and Courage were tested and failed. Three times he denied the Lord, to Whom he had said: "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." And "the Lord," standing before His judges and accusers, "turned and looked upon Peter." This *look* brought back to his mind his eager promises and his sad failure, and he "went out and wept bitterly."

The Remorse of Judas.—Read S. Matt. xxvii. 3–10. Far more sad was that which befell the traitor Judas. He also "repented" of his treachery, but his was not the true repentance which leads to salvation; the pricks of conscience and the cruel indifference of those to whom he had betrayed his Master goaded him into utter despair: "He went and hanged himself."

APPLICATION

See in the story of Our Lord's Trial: (*a*) The Majesty of the Saviour—His dignified silence, His patience under injustice (read 1 Peter ii. 21–23); (*b*) the malevolence of His enemies, the wanton cruelties they inflicted upon Him; (*c*) the desertion by His friends.

Contrast the penitence of S. Peter, which led to amendment and forgiveness, with the remorse of Judas, which drove him away from the One from Whom he also might have obtained forgiveness (see 2 Cor. vii. 10).

Collect: "O God, Whose nature and property . . . ."

Hymn 254: "Art thou weary, art thou languid."

Lesson XLIV. OUR LORD TRIED (*a*) BEFORE PILATE; (*b*) BEFORE HEROD

PREPARATION

Whenever we recite the Creed we say that Our Lord *suffered under Pontius Pilate.* Who was Pilate? He was the Governor, or Chief Magistrate, representing the Roman Emperor [just as we have a Governor-General representing our King in India]; his seat of government was Cæsarea [see Map]; he had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover, to quell any disturbances that might arise through the great concourse of people in the city. His residence was the "Judgment Hall" (*Prætorium*) spoken of by S. John xviii. 28. The mention of Pontius Pilate in the Creed fixes the date of Our Lord's Crucifixion, just as we fix the date of an event in English history by naming the king in whose reign it occurred.

PRESENTATION

The First Trial before Pilate.—Read S. John xviii. 28–38. Note in this narrative the following points: (i) *The charge alleged against Our Lord*—that He made Himself a King (*cp.* S. Luke xxiii. 2–5); this would have been treason against the Roman government, and so punishable by the Roman magistrate; the charge on which the Jewish Rulers condemned Him (Blasphemy against God) would have had no weight with Pilate. Our Lord explained in what sense He was a King in verse 36. (ii) *Pilate's wish to release Him.*—First he tried to throw the responsibility on the Jews (verse 31). The Jews might have stoned Him to death as a blasphemer, but they could not have crucified Him as the Romans did. (iii) *Pilate's declaration of Our Lord's Innocence* (verse 38).—S. Matthew (xxvii. 19) tells us of a strange dream of Pilate's wife, which she communicated to her husband; this may account for his manifest reluctance to condemn the innocent One.

The Trial before Herod.—Read S. Luke xxiii. 6–12. In the course of Our Lord's trial before Pilate it was mentioned that He came from Galilee. This was outside Pilate's jurisdiction; it was under the rule of Herod [known as Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, the murderer of the Innocents]. Here was another chance for Pilate to escape responsibility; S. Luke tells us that it did not succeed. It only served to bring upon Our Lord fresh outrage. The "gorgeous

robe" was probably some cast-off raiment of Herod or his courtiers, put on Jesus in mockery of His pretensions (as they would think them) to be a King.

The Second Trial before Pilate.—Read S. John xviii. 39 to xix. 16. One more attempt Pilate made to do the right thing, though in the wrong way. It was customary for the Governor at the Feast of the Passover to release some popular criminal, as an act of favour and clemency; should he exercise this act of mercy on behalf of Him Who was called "King of the Jews"? The answer was, "Not this Man, but Barabbas"—Barabbas, an outlaw and a murderer, was preferred to the blameless Christ. Again Pilate tries half-measures; he sentences the Lord to the terrible infliction of *scourging:* bound to a column or stake, He was beaten with a lash of leather thongs, perhaps loaded with lead or spikes. Then He was crowned with thorns and arrayed in purple or scarlet, and a reed (to imitate a sceptre) placed in His hand—all this in mockery of His Kingship. Pilate brings Him forth thus arrayed, once more protesting His innocence—as if to move to pity His cruel enemies. "Behold the Man!" [Picture.] But all in vain: the people were clamorous for His Crucifixion. Pilate, terrified by what he heard of Christ's claims (xix. 7), and terrified too by the imputation of disloyalty to his master, the Roman Emperor (verse 12), yielded to their demands and delivered Him to be Crucified.

APPLICATION

Pilate is an example of *moral cowardice.* He knew quite well that Jesus was innocent of any crime, and that it was "for envy His enemies had delivered Him." What was his duty? Plainly to set free one who had done no wrong. Note the various ways in which he tries to evade his duty. Read S. Matt. xxvii. 24. And his cowardice did not protect him from the evils he feared; at a later date he was reported to the Emperor by some of the people under his government, was summoned to Rome to answer for his misdeeds, and at last committed suicide.

> "*To do right, because 'tis right*
> *Were wisdom in the scorn of consequences.*"

Collect for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

Hymn 112: "All ye who seek for sure relief."

Lesson XLV. THE WAY OF THE CROSS. THE CRUCIFIXION

PREPARATION

We have seen Our Blessed Lord deprived of the sympathy of His friends, exposed to the bitter hate of His foes, delivered up, through the cowardice of the Roman governor, to their malice. The purple robe, which had been put on Him in mockery, was taken off and His own clothes put on Him. So He was led "outside the city wall" to be crucified.

PRESENTATION

The Way of the Cross.—Read S. Mark xv. 20, 21, and S. Luke xxiii. 27–31. It was part of a criminal's punishment to bear on his shoulder the cross on which he was to be executed; Our Lord broke down under the weight [remember all He had gone through during the night], and the Cross was laid upon another—Simon, a *Cyrenian* [either an African, or a Jew dwelling in Africa]. S. Luke tells us of the women who joined in the mournful procession; to them Our Lord foretold the woes that were to come upon them [the Destruction of Jerusalem, forty years later].

The Crucifixion.—Read S. Mark xv. 22–28. At length they reach the place of execution; S. Matthew, S. Mark, and S. John call it *Golgotha;* S. Luke, *Calvary*—the former being the Hebrew name, and the latter the Latin, meaning *the place of a skull*, probably because the shape of the hill was like that of a man's head. Here the Cross was laid on the ground, and Jesus stretched upon it and fastened to it by nails driven through His hands and feet; then the Cross was lifted up, with the Victim upon it, and jolted into the ground. [Think of the cruel pain this must have caused.] This was the work of the Roman soldiers (four); the clothes of the Crucified were their perquisite, and they divided these as far as they could, and "cast lots" with dice (i.e. *gambled*) for the seamless coat, which they could not divide without destroying it.

THE KING OF THE JEWS.—It was customary to put an inscription over the crucified one, saying who he was, and for what he suffered punishment. This was the superscription or title put at the head of Our Lord's Cross; it was written by Pilate himself (S. John xix. 19), seemingly to flout the Jews, and it was written in the three languages then spoken in the civilised world, that all that came up to the Feast might read it (*ib.*, 20). Note the Jews' re-

monstrance and Pilate's curt answer (*ib.*, 21, 22). So Our Lord hung on the Cross, with a royal title over His head, "reigning from the Tree."

The Thieves.—On each side of the Saviour's Cross was another cross, and on these were hung two thieves (robbers, bandits), men who had committed grievous offences against the law and were "receiving the due reward of their deeds." So was fulfilled Isa. liii. 12: "He was numbered with the transgressors."

The Mocking.—Read S. Mark xv. 29–32. Our Lord had been mocked (1) in the Palace of the High Priest, (2) by Herod and his men of war, (3) by the soldiers in Pilate's Judgment Hall. Now he has to bear the reviling of the passers-by; they brought up the charge which was falsely laid against Him at His trial before the High Priest's Court ("I will destroy this temple . . . and within three days I will build another"). The Chief Priests and the Scribes (the religious rulers) joined in the mockery: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save"—true words, though spoken in mockery, for He could only *save others* by *the sacrifice* of Himself. They referred to the title written on the Cross; "If He was a King, let Him prove His kingship by coming down from the Cross." Even the thieves who were crucified with Him joined in the insults that were poured upon Him.

APPLICATION

Picture as far as you can the scene on Calvary ("the green hill far away") nearly 1900 years ago—Jesus, the loving Saviour, crucified between two thieves; the Roman soldiers "tossing" (as we should say) for their little profits; the crowds passing by and jeering; only S. John and the Blessed Virgin and three other women sympathising with His sufferings. Think

(a) *Who it was that suffered*—Jesus the Son of God, the perfect Man.

(b) *What He suffered*—the pain, the shame:

> "We may not know, we cannot tell
> What pains He had to bear."

(c) *Why He suffered:*

> "But we believe it was for us
> He hung and suffered there."

(d) *His loving Patience.*—"When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not" (1 Pet. ii. 23).

Collect for the Sunday next before Easter.

Hymn 332: "There is a green hill far away."

Lesson XLVI. THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS

PREPARATION

Our Lord hung on the Cross for six hours; during the first three, from 9 to 12, He had to bear the burning heat of an Eastern sun, which would aggravate His sufferings; during the last three, from 12 to 3, there was darkness over the whole land. Holy Scripture records seven Sayings of Our Blessed Lord spoken during these hours of suffering.

"Seven times He spake, seven words of love."

We treasure up the *last words* of an earthly friend: much more should we prize and meditate upon the *last words* of our Most Holy Redeemer. We shall take them in order, as they seem to have been spoken.

PRESENTATION

1. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (S. Luke xxxiii. 34). This first saying was uttered perhaps as Jesus was being nailed to the Cross. It was a prayer for the Roman soldiers, who were only doing what they were ordered to do, not knowing that they were crucifying "the Lord of Glory." It is a Prayer for all who sin against God through ignorance. We pray in the Litany that God will forgive our "sins, negligences, and *ignorances*."

2. To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise (S. Luke xxiii. 43)—spoken to the Penitent Thief. Both the thieves crucified with Our Lord had at first "reviled Him." One was moved by His patience under suffering and insult; he reproved the other for his abusive words; he confessed his sin and the sinlessness of Jesus (verse 41), and turned to the Saviour for pardon. "Lord, remember me," was met with this promise.

3. Woman, behold thy Son! Behold thy mother? (S. John xix. 26)—spoken to the Blessed Virgin, and to the beloved Disciple (S. John) who were standing at the foot of the Cross. Jesus was mindful of His beloved Mother at His last hour, and entrusted her to the keeping of the disciple whom He specially loved.

4. My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? (S. Mark xv. 34, and S. Matt. xxvii. 36). Both the Evangelists recall the words

of Our Lord in the language in which they were spoken. Darkness falls upon the earth, and Our Lord feels for the moment as if He had been abandoned even by His heavenly Father. He expresses the anguish of His soul in the words of Ps. xxii. 1. It was the sin of the world, which He took upon Himself that He might take it away, which for the moment hid the face of God from Him.

5. I thirst (S. John xix. 28). Only this single word about His own bodily sufferings. The agony of thirst caused by the wounds, the fever which followed, and the exposure to the hot rays of the sun. It moved the pity of one of the bystanders, who gave Him a drink of the vinegar, or sour wine of the country. [*Cp.* Ps. lxix. 21.] Another *thirst* the Saviour felt—a "thirst for the souls of men" (see Hymn 119).

6. It is finished (S. John xix. 30). The suffering was drawing to an end. Our Lord had finished the work the Father gave Him to do; He had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies which spoke of His sufferings: all was done.

7. Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit (S. Luke xxiii. 46). The words (taken from Ps. xxxi. 5) were part of the Night Prayer said by a Jewish child—the Prayer which He would have learnt from the Blessed Virgin in the home at Nazareth. It is "Father" again now, as it was in the first of these Words—the cloud referred to in the fourth Word has rolled away; all is peace.

He bowed His Head, and gave up the Ghost (S. John xix. 30).—Our Lord *gave up* His life; it was not taken from Him (see S. John x. 18). The "loud voice" with which He uttered His last cry showed that His natural powers were not exhausted.

APPLICATION

What lessons may we learn from this most touching story of the last hours of Our Saviour?

(a) *Sympathy with the Divine Sufferer.*—Nature sympathised with Him—the "sun was darkened," as if all the world went into mourning. The people who had come either out of curiosity or in malice "smote their breasts and returned" (S. Luke xxiii. 48).

(b) *Truly this Man was the Son of God.*—This was the conclusion of the Centurion, who was in command of the Roman soldiers appointed to carry out the execution.

Collect: First Collect for Good Friday.

Hymn 114: "O come and mourn with me awhile."

Lesson XLVII. THE EVENTS WHICH FOLLOWED OUR LORD'S DEATH ON THE CROSS

PREPARATION

"Crucified, dead, and buried."—How often we have said these words without perhaps thinking very much of their meaning! Our last two Lessons should have helped us to picture for ourselves the Crucifixion and Death, and to realise what it meant for us. It was "for us men and for our salvation" that Jesus Christ died. The Church has fixed one Day in the year on which this is specially commemorated—Good Friday—and every Friday in the year is marked, as it were, with the sign of the Cross, as "a day of fasting or abstinence."

PRESENTATION

The piercing of Our Lord's Side.—Read S. John xix. 31–37. It was the eve of the Jewish Sabbath (which would begin at 6 o'clock on the Friday evening). It was a Sabbath Day, too, of special sacredness—"a high day"; in the eyes of the Jews it would have been a desecration of the Feast Day for the bodies of the crucified to remain hanging on the crosses—often their sufferings lasted for days; hence the brutal treatment of the two thieves (verse 32). The sacred Body of Our Lord was spared this indignity, for "He was dead already"; but a soldier, to make sure, pierced His side—thus adding a fifth to the four sacred wounds, "the dear tokens of His passion." Refer to Exod. xii. 46, spoken of the Passover Lamb; S. John notices how this was fulfilled in Our Lord; and also the prophecy of Zechariah (xii. 10), "They shall look upon Me, Whom they have pierced." From the pierced side of Our Lord "there came out blood and water"—*Blood* symbolical of Holy Communion, and *Water*, of Holy Baptism.

The Entombment.—Read S. Mark xv. 42–47. *Joseph of Arimathæa* (or Ramah), he was an honourable counsellor (*i.e.* a member of the great council called the Sanhedrin of the Jews), rich, "a good man and a just"; he had not consented to the action taken by the Sanhedrin in condemning Our Lord; he "waited for the Kingdom of God," *i.e.* for the coming of the Christ; and he was a disciple of

Jesus, but hitherto "secretly," because he would have been turned out of his place in the Council if he had confessed his belief in Christ. But now he comes *boldly*, thinking no more of his position, and asks Pilate for the body of the Crucified Lord. Having obtained this precious charge he wrapped the body in clean linen, a hundredweight of spices being placed within the folds of the linen (S. John xix. 40) to keep the Body from putrefaction. Then he placed it in a new tomb, prepared by the cutting away of the rock. There was another associated with Joseph in this pious work—*Nicodemus*. He, like Joseph, had been a secret hearer of Our Lord—he came to Him by night (S. John iii. 1)—and, like him, he was a "ruler of the Jews," *i.e.* a member of the Sanhedrin. Now by this act he openly declares himself to be a disciple.

The Sealing of the Sepulchre.—Read S. Matt. xxvii. 62–66. Our Lord had spoken to His disciples of His rising again the third day (see S. Matt. xvi. 21). This had become known to the Chief Priests and others; even on the Sabbath Day, breaking their own rule of Sabbath observance, they came to Pilate, begging him to take precautions against any possible removal of the dead Body from the tomb. Pilate allowed them to have a guard of Roman soldiers for this purpose, and they put a band of some kind over the stone which closed the mouth of the tomb, and sealed it to the tomb at each end. Such precautions they took to imprison the Lord of Life; we shall see in our next lesson with what success!

APPLICATION

We have heard much in the Lessons lately of the malice and cruelty of Our Lord's enemies; it is good for us to notice to-day the fidelity of some of His friends—Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, who, "Counsellors" as they were, did not disdain the task of preparing for the grave One Who had died the death of a Malefactor; and the two Marys who lingered by His tomb—"A friend loveth at all times."

Collect for Easter Even.

Hymn 124: "Resting from His work to-day."

Lesson XLVIII. THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

PREPARATION

"Crucified, dead, and buried."—What comes next in the Creed? "He descended into Hell." At death Our Lord's soul was separated from His body; the body (as we learnt in our last Lesson) was laid in Joseph's tomb. What became of the soul? It passed into Hades, *the unseen world* [that is what *Hell* means, not the realm of Satan], the abode of the departed, what is called elsewhere *Paradise*. [Recall Our Lord's promise to the Penitent Thief.] Refer to Ps. xvi. 11, 12. S. Peter (Acts ii. 27, 31) teaches us how to explain this: the soul *of Christ* was not left in hell, and his body was preserved from corruption or decay.

PRESENTATION

The Resurrection.—Read S. Matt. xxviii. 1–4. No human eye saw the Lord rise again. S. Matthew tells us of the earthquake, and the rolling away of the stone by the Angel. This was not needed to set free the Resurrection Body of the Lord, but only to disclose to His disciples the empty tomb. [*Cp.* the *false* story which the soldiers of the watch were bribed to tell (S. Matt. xxviii. 11–15).]

The Angel Witnesses to His Resurrection.—Read S. Matt. xxviii. 5–8, and *cp.* S. Mark xvi. 5–8, and S. Luke xxiv. 3–11. These passages tell the story in different ways, but they agree in this, that angels announced the Resurrection to the holy women who had come very early in the morning to anoint or embalm the sacred Body of the Lord; that these women were told to go and carry the good news to S. Peter and the other Apostles; that they did what they were bidden to do, but their words were treated as "idle tales."

Other Visitors to the empty Tomb.—Read S. John xx. 1–10. The news that the tomb had been found empty was brought by S. Mary Magdalene to S. Peter. He hurries to the grave to test the truth of what had been told him; S. John follows, and, being a younger man than S. Peter, outruns him; coming to the sepulchre he sees the linen wrappings which had enclosed the body of the Lord;

apparently from awe and reverence, he does not enter the tomb, but S. Peter is bold enough to do this, and sees the wrappings, and the linen cloth which had been bound round the head of the Christ (like a turban), not thrown with the other cloths, but folded as it had been when the sacred head was enclosed within it. Then S. John enters, and both are convinced that "the Lord was risen indeed." [It was later in the day that the Lord appeared to S. Peter (S. Luke xxiv. 34).]

Appearances: (1) *to Mary Magdalene*, (2) *to the Holy Women.*—Read S. Mark xvi. 9; S. John xx. 11–18; S. Matt. xxviii. 9, 10. "First to Mary Magdalene"—named from Magdala, her native place in Galilee—one of the holy women from Galilee, who ministered to Our Lord (S. Luke viii. 1–3). S. John tells us the touching story of her first interview with the Risen Lord. Note Our Lord's words, "Touch Me not" (verse 17); it was a warning to the Magdalene that the old intimacy which had existed during Our Lord's earthly life was not to be renewed; soon (in forty days) He would ascend into heaven, and then, through His Church and Sacraments, His faithful people should *touch* Him in another and higher sense.

A later appearance to S. Mary Magdalene, now in company with others of the holy women (Mary, the mother of James, and Salome), is recorded by S. Matthew.

APPLICATION

"Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again His body" (Articles of Religion, No. 4). Why is it important for us to be assured of this? (i) Because it shows WHO it was that died on the Cross. Jesus Christ was "declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). (ii) Because it is the assurance that we shall rise again from the dead: "Christ hath risen, men shall rise." "The third day He rose again": "I believe in the resurrection of the dead." "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death: Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers."

Collect for Easter Day.

Hymn 140: "Jesus lives, no longer now."

Lesson XLIX. THE APPEARANCE OF THE RISEN LORD TO TWO TRAVELLERS

PREPARATION

Recall the appearances of Our Blessed Lord after His Resurrection, of which we heard in the last Lesson; (i) to Mary Magdalene; (ii) to her and other holy women; (iii) to S. Peter. The two first were to those who had showed special love to Him in His life; the last is only just mentioned by S. Luke (xxiv. 34); not mentioned at all in S. Mark's Gospel, for which S. Peter is believed to have furnished materials to S. Mark. What is the reason for this silence? Recall the last meeting between Our Lord and S. Peter in the High Priest's Judgment Hall (Lesson XLIII). Then S. Peter had denied Him; what shame must he have felt when he met the Lord risen again, to Whom before His death he had been false. The interview must have been too sacred to be told even by an Evangelist. Perhaps for the same reason we are told nothing of a meeting between Our Lord after His Resurrection and His Blessed Mother; and yet we cannot think that He withheld from her the consolation and joy which He bestowed on Mary Magdalene and others.

PRESENTATION

The Travellers and the unknown Companion.—Read S. Luke xxiv. 13–27 (*cp.* S. Mark xvi. 12, 13). Think of that first Easter Day—the trouble of the bereaved; the gleam of hope that was given them; the joy of those who saw, the doubt and perplexity of those who had not yet seen, the Risen Lord. The day is drawing to its close; two disciples of Jesus—on their way to a village, Emmaus, seven or eight miles away from Jerusalem—talking one to another of all that had happened in these last few days. A stranger joins them on the road, asks what has been the subject of their conversation, and why they look so sad. One of the two—whose name was Cleopas—expresses his wonder that even a temporary sojourner in Jerusalem [come up for the Feast] should not know of the events which are in the mouth of everybody; in answer to further inquiry they tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth, of their own disappointment [they had trusted that He would be the Saviour of their country (verse 21)], of the hopes springing from words which He had used about "rising again on the third day"—hopes quickened by the reports, brought by the holy women and S. Peter and S. John, of the empty tomb and the angels they had seen. Then the Stranger takes them to task for not having learnt the lessons about the Christ which they might have learnt from the Old Testament Scriptures; "it behoved [or

befitted] Christ to suffer"; there was no reason for them to be sad, for the Master in Whom they trusted had only fulfilled what the prophets had foretold.

The Stranger made known.—Read S. Luke xxiv. 28–35. At length they come to the village which was the limit of their journey. The Stranger seemed to be going on, not stopping when they stopped. [Perhaps this was to try their faith, to see if they cared to hear more of His teaching.] Note their kind invitation (verse 29); evening was drawing on, and they asked Him to stay the night with them. The invitation was accepted, and the three sat down for their evening meal; then "He took bread and blessed it and brake, and gave to them." When before did we read of a like act? And Who was it who performed the act then? Our Lord in the Upper Room, when He gave the Bread and Wine to His disciples [see Lesson XXXVIII]. Something in His action or manner or words revealed Him to them. "They knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight." Then they recalled the words He had spoken to them by the way, and how they had been thrilled by those words. And, though "the day was far spent," and they must have been wearied by their long walk, they set out at once on their return to Jerusalem; the news was too good to be kept to themselves; they carried it to "the Eleven," who found in it a confirmation of what they had already heard from S. Peter and from the holy women.

APPLICATION

Our Lord joins the two travellers, unknown to them, and breaks in upon their conversation; "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk?" If the Lord were to join us in our walks, in our play, at school or in our homes, and ask us the same question, should we always be able to answer without a blush of shame? He *does* join us, though we do not see Him; and He hears sometimes, alas! impure words, false words, passionate words. Let the thought of His Presence "keep the door of our lips."

We cannot say that what Our Lord did in the house at Emmaus meant just the same as what He did in the Upper Room the night before He died, but it is said "He was known of them *in breaking of bread*" (which is the phrase used in the Acts of the Apostles for the Holy Communion), and we cannot but see some connection between this action and the Holy Sacrament in which Christians recognise the presence of Our Lord.

Collect for the First Sunday after Easter.

Hymn 27: "Abide with me."

Lesson L. THE APPEARANCE TO THE APOSTLES AT JERUSALEM

PREPARATION

The first Easter Day is drawing to its close. The two travellers had got back from Emmaus, and reported the wondrous conversation on the road and the disclosure of the Risen Lord. "The Eleven" (as they are called, now that Judas was gone; but on this occasion there were but Ten, Thomas being absent) were gathered in a room—perhaps the "Upper Room" in which they had gathered on the night before Our Lord suffered.

PRESENTATION

The Appearance to the Ten.—Read S. Luke xxiv. 36–43. "The doors were shut," S. John tells us, "for fear of the Jews"; those who had crucified the Lord might naturally be expected to persecute His servants. While the disciples were discussing the tidings that the Emmaus travellers had brought, *Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them.* How He came into the room, "the doors being shut"? Whence He came? Where He went? These are questions that we cannot answer, but can only reverently think about. Note His salutation: "Peace be unto you." It was the ordinary Jewish form of greeting. But nothing could be common or ordinary which proceeded from the mouth of Our Lord. It was the assurance of "Peace" to them after the sorrows and doubts they had had (*cp.* S. John xiv. 27; xvi. 33). At first the disciples were terrified; they thought "they had seen *a spirit*" [or *ghost*]. To give them confidence, He offered them permission to touch and handle His sacred Body, that they might be assured of its reality. He showed His hands and His feet and His side. What would they see? The five sacred wounds, the marks of His Passion. He even took food and ate before them—not that He needed bodily sustenance, but He gave them this convincing proof that it was no phantom or ghost that appeared to them. "Then," S. John tells us, "were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." He tells us also (xx. 21–23) of the great Commission which Our Lord gave to His Apostles; they were to be His representatives, to carry on in the world the work which He came to do. All this is implied in the words, "As My Father hath sent Me,

even so send I you"; He "breathed on them," and thus bestowed upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit, to empower them to do that which was entrusted to them.

The Appearance to the Eleven.—Read S. John xx. 24–29. It was on the evening of the first Easter Day that Our Lord appeared to *the Ten.* Of the Twelve whom Jesus chose, Judas was missing; he had "gone to his own place"; and S. John tells us of another who missed the Easter joy—Thomas—called *Didymus, i.e.* the *twin* [possibly he was the twin brother of S. Matthew, who is mentioned along with him in the Gospels]. [illegible] to S. John xiv. 4, 5, and xi. 16; these give a clue to his character: "he seems to have combined devotion to Christ with a tendency to see the dark side of everything"; he was perhaps brooding in solitude when the Ten met together, and he refused to believe the good news which they gave him of the Risen Lord, Who had appeared to them (xx. 25); he thought it *too good to be true.* The Lord did not leave His true-hearted servant long in doubt: "after eight days" [*i.e.* on the eighth day—the Sunday following His previous appearance] Thomas was with his brother Apostles; and again, though the doors were shut, Jesus stood in the midst; He greeted them with the same salutation which He had used a week before. Though unseen, He had heard the demand S. Thomas had made for convincing proof of the reality of the Resurrection; all that he had asked for, Jesus now offers him (*cp.* verses 25 and 27). S. Thomas acknowledged Him as his Lord: "My Lord, and my God." Read verse 29; Thomas is gently rebuked for his previous want of faith; a blessing is pronounced on those who, not having seen, have yet believed; in this blessing we may share.

APPLICATION

Read Acts i. 3. The "forty days" are those following Our Lord's Resurrection, during which, from time to time, He appeared to those who were worthy to behold Him. It was "for the more confirmation of the faith" that S. Thomas was suffered to be doubtful of the Resurrection; his doubt made others more confident. Read 1 Cor. xv. 4–7.

Collect for S. Thomas's Day.

Hymn 130: "O sons and daughters, let us sing."

Lesson LI. THE APPEARANCE TO SEVEN DISCIPLES AT THE SEA OF GALILEE

PREPARATION

In our last Lesson we heard of two appearances of Our Blessed Lord to His Apostles—one on Easter Day, and one on the Sunday following. These were at Jerusalem. But Our Lord had told His disciples to go into Galilee, their old home, and promised that He would appear to them there (S. Mark xvi. 7). S. John, who tells us so very little about Our Lord's work in Galilee, yet tells us of one of the occasions in which the promise was fulfilled.

PRESENTATION

The Appearance to the Seven.—Read S. John xxi. 1–14. The disciples had gone to their homes, which they had left at the command of Jesus. What were they to do now? S. Peter proposes a return to their old occupation as fishermen—there is no such remedy for low spirits and perplexity of mind as honest work. Six joined him; the names of four are given [one was *Nathanael*, mentioned in the narrative in S. John i. 45–51, called elsewhere *Bartholomew*]; two are unnamed, one of these being S. John himself (verse 7). Then we read of the fruitless fishing, the Stranger (at first unknown) appearing on the shore at daybreak, the question asked, the disciples' reply, the direction to attempt another cast, the "great multitude of fishes." They remembered an earlier "miraculous draught of fishes," and S. John drew the conclusion that the mysterious Stranger was none other than the Lord. S. Peter, impulsive as usual, plunged into the sea, and swam the 200 cubits (300 yards) that separated him from his Lord; he had been stript for his fisherman's work, but he put on a coat before he entered the water, that he might appear in seemly form before the Master. Preparations had been made for their meal, and Jesus Himself acted as their Host. The number of the fish caught (153) is recorded by S. John. S. John mentions also the awe that fell upon the disciples (verse 12). He mentions this as the third appearance *to the disciples*—the two earlier being those we learnt about in the last Lesson. [Those narrated in Lessons XLVIII and XLIX are not reckoned here, as they were not appearances to the disciples, or Apostles, as a body.]

The Lord's Words to S. Peter after the Miracle.—Read S. John xxi. 15–19. Note the question *three times repeated*, "Lovest thou Me?"

Remember S. Peter's three denials; he could not fail to have been reminded of them. "Lovest thou Me *more than these do?*" was a rebuke to the over-confidence which S. Peter had shown on former occasions (see *e.g.* S. Matt. xxvi. 35). He does not now venture to compare himself with others. And he uses a word for *love* less strong than that which Our Lord had used in His question: he was learning lessons of humility and self-distrust. Our Lord (i) gives to S. Peter, as the representative of the Apostles, the command to "feed the flock," what is called the "Pastoral Commission" [from *Pastor*, a shepherd]; (ii) announces to S. Peter the manner of His death, which was to be by crucifixion ("thou shalt stretch forth thy hands"). The tradition is that by his own wish he was crucified head downwards, not considering himself worthy to be crucified as his Master was.

The Future of S. John.—Read xxi. 20–24. S. Peter has been told of his own future; he wants to know also what is reserved for his friend, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Our Lord answered him in mysterious words (verse 22). They were taken by the brethren to mean that S. John should not die, but the Evangelist (S. John himself) is careful to explain that this is not necessarily implied in the Lord's words. We know that S. John did live to a great age, beyond the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70; that destruction was one of the *comings of the Lord*, and may be referred to here. S. Peter was gently rebuked for his curiosity: "What is that to thee? follow thou Me"; the duty for S. Peter and for us is to follow Christ—do His will. We may trust Him to order all things for good to those we love.

APPLICATION

"Miracles," as we have learnt before, are "acted Parables," *i.e.* they set forth heavenly realities under earthly figures. The disciples, fishing without success, are like the Church of Christ, toiling often without apparent result. When the result of its work is reckoned up, He will make His servants sit down at the heavenly Feast which He has prepared for them. The number of the fish caught, mentioned so exactly, indicates the number of God's elect people whom He will gather into His Kingdom of Glory.

Collect for S. Peter's Day.

Hymn 222: "Ten thousand times ten thousand."

Lesson LII. THE FINAL APPEARANCES OF THE RISEN LORD. THE ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN

PREPARATION

We have been thinking of events which happened during the Great Forty Days that followed Our Lord's Resurrection; during that period He showed Himself alive, "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen of God, even to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead"—so said S. Peter, who was one of those "witnesses" (Acts x. 41). The Resurrection Body which Our Lord wore was the same that hung on the cross and was laid in the grave; this was shown by the marks on feet, and hands, and side; but it was "a glorious Body," no longer subject to the conditions of an earthly body; the barred doors were no obstacles to His appearing; He disappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as He came. We have to think to-day of His final appearances, and of the withdrawal of His visible Presence from the earth.

PRESENTATION

The Appearance on the Mountain in Galilee.—Read S. Matt. xxviii. 16–20, and *cp.* S. Mark xvi. 15–18. Note (i) Our Lord's claim to sovereignty over all creation (verse 18). It was Jesus, born of Mary, laid in the manger in the stable, crucified on Calvary, who makes this claim; it was the outcome of all that He had done and suffered for men—"God hath highly exalted Him." (ii) The institution of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism to be the means of entry into Christ's Kingdom: "Go ye *therefore*" [because all power is Mine], "and make disciples of *all the nations*" [since all belong to Me], "baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (S. Matt. xxviii. 19, R.V.). (iii) Our Lord's Promise of His perpetual presence with His Church and people. He was about to be taken away from them, so far as His bodily presence was concerned, but this withdrawal did not mean separation from them; He would be more truly with them when He was removed from their sight than He had been while He was on the earth in fleshly form. Read S. John xiv. 18, and compare what was said of Our Lord's words to the Magdalene (Lesson XLVIII): Where two or three are gathered together in His Name, there is He in the midst of them (S. Matt. xviii. 20).

The Disciples again at Jerusalem. The Lord's Ascension.—Read Acts i. 4–11, and *cp.* S. Luke xxiv. 50–53. The stay of the disciples

in Galilee had been but temporary; it was a fulfilment of the Lord's command; we presently find them again at Jerusalem holding converse with their Lord, Who charged them to remain there till the promise of the gift of the Comforter was fulfilled. He told them of the work that awaited them—to be witnesses to Him, and to bear this witness: first in Jerusalem (where they then were); next in Judæa, the region of which Jerusalem was the capital; then in Samaria and Galilee (districts to the north of Judæa); and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. So they and those who came after them would fulfil His command—to "preach the Gospel to every creature."

Then He led them out "until they were over against Bethany" (S. Luke xxiv. 50). It was Bethany on the Mount of Olives, a little more than a mile out of Jerusalem; it was dear to Our Lord as being the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus (whom He raised from the dead); it was from here that He began His triumphal march into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; and it was here that He spent the nights of the week before He suffered. Here, S. Luke tells us, "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them," and, in the act of blessing, "He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." So He completed His work on earth, but He still carries on for us His work in Heaven—"He ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25).

"Where high the heavenly temple stands,
The house of God not made with hands,
A great High Priest our Nature wears,
The Guardian of mankind appears."

APPLICATION

We have finished the course of Lessons on the Life of Our Blessed Lord, which we began a year ago. We might ask the question which He once asked: "What think ye of Christ?"—His wondrous Childhood, His loving obedience in the home at Nazareth, His dutiful fulfilment of the will of His Father in heaven, His words of heavenly wisdom, His deeds of loving kindness, His dying for our sins, His rising from the dead, and ascension into heaven?

"Truly this was the Son of God."

"At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow."

Collect for Ascension Day.

Hymn 150: "Jesu, our Hope, our heart's Desire."

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